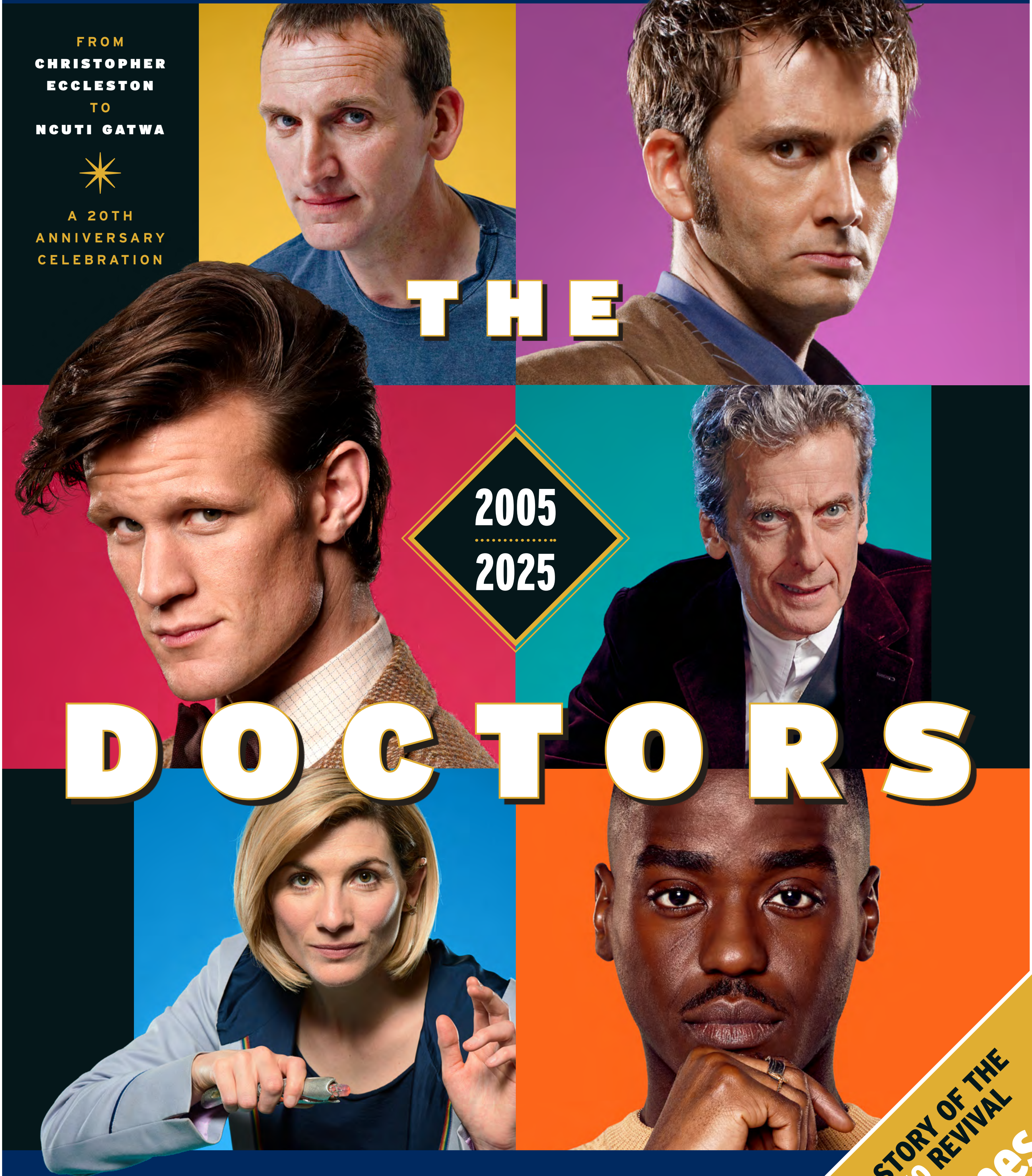
RadioTimes



FROM
CHRISTOPHER
ECCLESTON
TO
NCUTI GATWA

✶

A 20TH
ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION

THE DOCTORS

2005
……
2025

CLASSIC INTERVIEWS
AND PHOTOGRAPHY

THE INSIDE STORY OF THE
DOCTOR WHO REVIVAL

RadioTimes
DIGITAL
SPECIAL

RadioTimes
DOCTOR WHO
Knock, knock
Who's there?
WIN £100,000 TO PAY OFF YOUR MORTGAGE

26 MARCH 2005

RadioTimes
VOTE DALEK!
They're back – and better (or worse) than ever!

30 APRIL 2005

RadioTimes
CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
WIN A REAL DALEK
Happy Christmas!

17 DECEMBER 2005

RadioTimes
LOOK WHO'S BACK
ONLY IN RT

15 APRIL 2006

RadioTimes
WELCOME BACK?
FREE INSIDE!

13 MAY 2006

RadioTimes
BATTLE FOR THE WORLD
DALEKS
V CYBERMEN

8 JULY 2006

RadioTimes
BATTLE FOR THE WORLD
CYBERMEN
V DALEKS

8 JULY 2006

RadioTimes
It's nearly Christmas!

16 DECEMBER 2006

RadioTimes
Who's that girl?

31 MARCH 2007

RadioTimes
Who's that girl?

31 MARCH 2007

RadioTimes
FREE!
HALF-DALEK, HALF-HUMAN
TOTAL MONSTER?
The Daleks are back!

21 APRIL 2007

RadioTimes
DAVID TENNANT IS
THE DOCTOR

30 JUNE 2007

RadioTimes
JOHN SIMM IS
THE MASTER

30 JUNE 2007

RadioTimes
WHO'S WHO?
DANIEL RADCLIFFE

10 NOVEMBER 2007

RadioTimes
It's nearly Christmas...

8 DECEMBER 2007

RadioTimes
THE STARS ARE COMING OUT...

5 APRIL 2008

RadioTimes
THE STARS ARE COMING OUT...

5 APRIL 2008

RadioTimes
THE STARS ARE COMING OUT...

5 APRIL 2008

RadioTimes
THE STARS ARE COMING OUT...

5 APRIL 2008

RadioTimes
FREE INSIDE!
SONTARANS
FREE INSIDE DOCTOR WHO AUDIO CD

26 APRIL 2008

RadioTimes
SHE'S BACK!

21 JUNE 2008

RadioTimes
WIN DAVROS'S MASK
IT'S DAVROS!

5 JULY 2008

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WHO'S THE DOCTOR?

6 DECEMBER 2008

RadioTimes
COMIC RELIEF!

7 MARCH 2009

RadioTimes
Who? What? Where?
FREE INSIDE

11 APRIL 2009

RadioTimes
The scariest Doctor Who?
David Tennant is back

14 NOVEMBER 2009

RadioTimes
DEATH OF A DOCTOR

5 DECEMBER 2009

RadioTimes
Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year

19 DECEMBER 2009

RadioTimes
ALL NEW WHO

3 APRIL 2010

RadioTimes
VOTE DALEK
RT BRINGS BACK SPITTING IMAGE!

17 APRIL 2010

RadioTimes
VOTE DALEK
RT BRINGS BACK SPITTING IMAGE!

17 APRIL 2010

RadioTimes
VOTE DALEK
RT BRINGS BACK SPITTING IMAGE!

17 APRIL 2010

RadioTimes
Thoroughly Modern Amy

19 JUNE 2010

RadioTimes
Join the Doctor

11 DECEMBER 2010

RadioTimes
BE AFRAID!

16 APRIL 2011

OPENING THE BOX

Showrunner **Russell T Davies** spoke to *RT* in 2003 about his ambitions for *Doctor Who* as he prepared to begin work on the revival

PUBLISHED **22 NOVEMBER 2003**

THE NEW DOCTOR

Hard to say at this stage. I just want to make him the best character ever. He should be so fascinating, he's radioactive. He's funny, clever, wild and fast. Your best friend times 500.

BASIC INSTINCTS

The trick is to make it more real in terms of the very first episode having genuine wonderment. I can fairly confidently predict that there will be a young female companion who will discover that she can explore time and space. If you watch *Doctor Who*, you can take that for granted, but it's the most astonishing concept. It's really time to go back to basics on that… For the companions, this is the greatest journey of your life. You cannot underestimate that. I want to write these characters as I would in anything else, and I write character well, though I say so myself.

SINGULAR VISION

Money is a problem; it would never be as cheap as it used to be. But if you look at that old stuff, it's a four-camera studio. Everything's shot on single camera these days. Get a single camera in there, proper lenses, proper lighting, even the old stuff would look better. I think we're going to get on top of it.

FIRM FOUNDATION

The sets won't wobble! They won't! I shall lean against them myself, and I'm 6ft 6. I personally will eliminate wobble! **NICK GRIFFITHS**

POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX
POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX
POLICE TELEPHONE
FREE
FOR USE OF
PUBLIC
PULL TO OPEN

"HE'S YOUR BEST FRIEND TIMES 500"

◀ Photographing the Tardis for *RT*'s series launch cover in 2005 – shot by Mark Harrison

COVER IMAGES: SVEN ARNSTEIN; RAY BURMISTON; MARK HARRISON; MARK HARRISON; MATT HOLYOAK. FACING PAGE: RAY BURMISTON; RICHARD GRASSIE; MARK HARRISON; MIKE HOGAN

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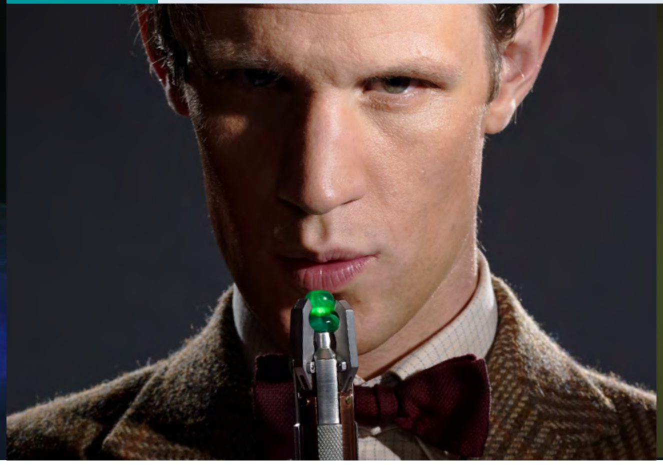

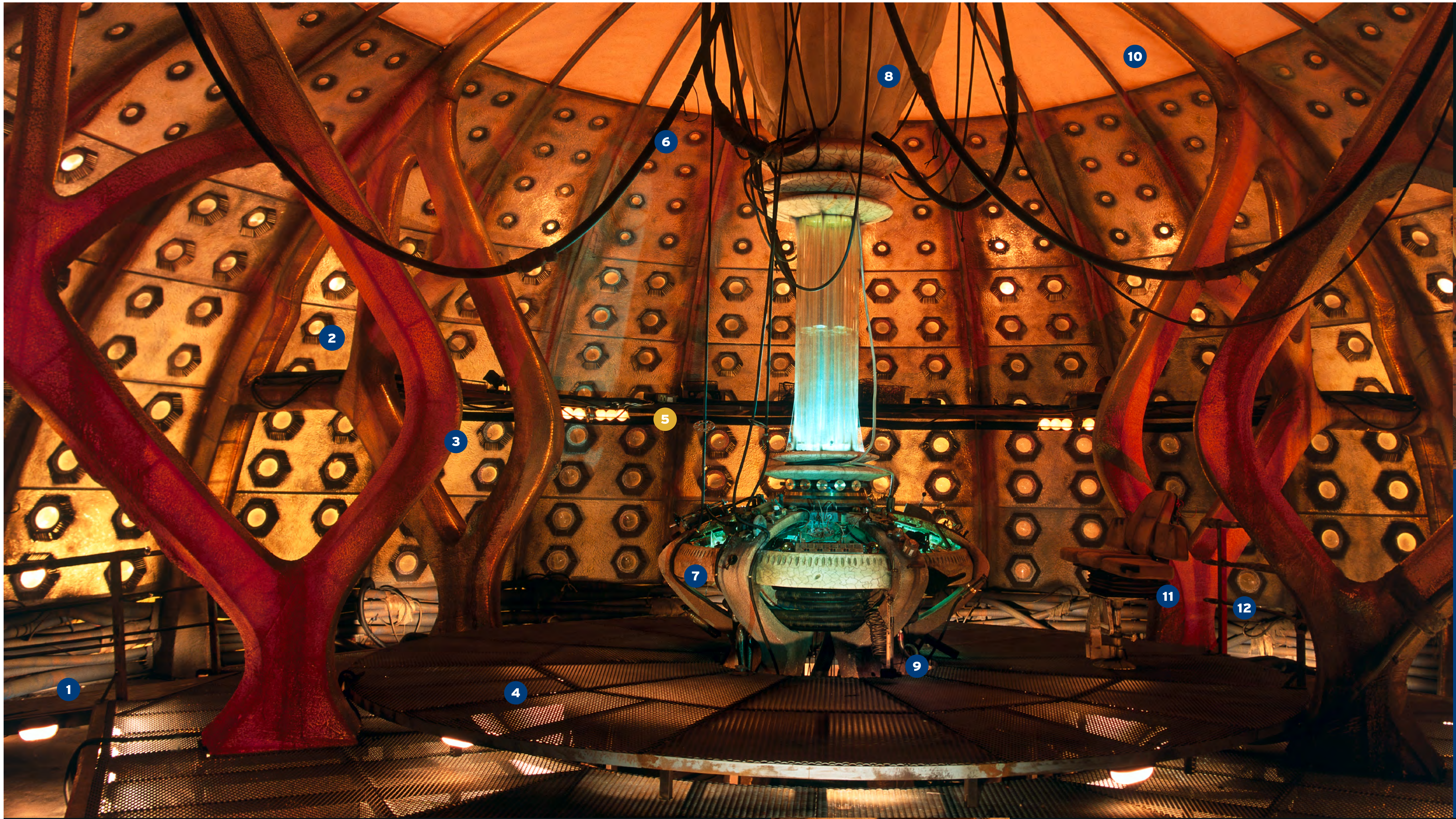

◀ The 2005 Tardis set, photographed for *RT* by Mark Harrison

▼ Production designer Edward Thomas sitting proud

TAKE THE TARDIS TOUR

1 Gangway from police box door **2** Roundels enable the Tardis to travel through time **3** Support beams, overgrown with coral **4** Removable floor panel **5** Upper level for servicing purposes **6** Tubes for power and air conditioning **7** Time rotor insulated against electric shocks **8** Casing to hide Tardis motor **9** Hammer for when the Tardis won't start **10** Glass casing lets in light from outside **11** Seat for when the going gets rough **12** Padded hand rail for that bumpy ride!

PUBLISHED **26 MARCH 2005**

INSIDE THE SPACESHIP

Production designer **Edward Thomas** has been thinking outside the box to create a modern Doctor's world

THE INTERIOR

“I went right back, to work out what the Gallifreyan world was all about, before we started designing the Tardis's architecture. Coral came to mind, and glass, and superior technology. Natural organic things. Coral does grow and envelop itself on things, so I wanted to suggest that this is where the Tardis is now, and in another 100 years it'll look very different. Once we'd got that, we could really start playing with shapes and what works for the camera.

“What made previous Tardises look like sets was the flat floor, so I raised it up and gave the Doctor the chance to get down underneath and really work at the console. It's much more of an organic time machine than electrical. It's 6.5m tall inside [21ft], and cost roughly £100,000.”

THE CONSOLE

“Set decorator Peter Walpole dressed the Tardis. He'd just finished *AVP: Alien vs Predator* and did the last *Star Wars* movies. I told him, ‘Find me chess pieces as switches!' I didn't want anything to look as if it could do the job it should be doing. The Doctor would think, ‘In your world that has a use but in my world I can use it for something else.' Peter went all over the place – auctions, junkyards, reclamation yards – and pulled together all these interesting objects. Bells, a bit off a speedboat…”

THE EXTERIOR

“It looks very similar, but we've actually changed the dimensions. I wanted to make the exterior Tardis much more in line with how the original police boxes were, dating back to the 1930s, so we made it much more bulky and much taller. I always felt that the old one looked very dainty, very ballerina-ish, and I wanted a bulldog. I wanted something that really felt as if it could travel through time and space.”

NICK GRIFFITHS

THE NINTH WONDER

"I must be the chippiest actor in Britain," says **Christopher Eccleston**. **Michael Hodges** discovers that the former Doctor has a lot to get off his chest

PUBLISHED **24 MARCH 2018**

Christopher Eccleston has a battering ram for a nose and a gaze that could clear a public bar. It's a fighter's face. "No," he objects. "I can't fight my way out of a paper bag. I look like I can but I've got a black belt in cowardice. I hate violence." Good job he is such a fine actor then.

As we speak, he's about to take on *Macbeth* with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon, a role requiring him, among other acts of extreme violence to, as Shakespeare puts it, "unseam" someone "from the nave to the chaps", then have Macduff's wife and children killed. "It's the one I've always wanted to play," he says of the demented Scottish king. "The biggest thing I've ever done."

We're having Sunday lunch at the Dirty Duck, the actors' pub beside the River Avon. Eccleston has ordered a giant rib of beef with all the trimmings – none of which will be left by the end of the interview. It's not-quite-hangover hunger; the night before, the young cast members had been out, "going nuts, tearing the place up", but Eccleston knows his limits. "At 2am I said, 'Listen, lads – I'm 54 and I'm playing Macbeth. I'm going home.'" Now he's drinking squash.

"I ran away to join the circus," he says of leaving Salford to become an actor 35 years ago. "And there's a lot of boozing in the circus. I love that, I love wine, women and song. But I love the work much more; nothing gets in the way of the work. I'm quite puritanical. I always was. I still feel shocked to not be working in a factory. I'll never go on stage drunk or not turn up. My mum and dad would be ashamed of me."

Eccleston's parents feature a lot in our conversation. His mother Elsie lives in the North West; his father Ronnie, a forklift-truck driver who read to young Eccleston from a dictionary ("so I could share his passion for words"), died in 2012, ▶

▶ Christopher Eccleston, photographed for *RT* in 2010 by Sven Arnstein

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26 MARCH–1 APRIL 2005 93p

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...AND STEP INTO THE TARDIS TO MEET...

Christopher Eccleston as Doctor Who and Billie Piper as Rose Tyler

▲ WELCOME ABOARD

RT's launch cover from March 2005, which featured opening Tardis doors, revealing the new Doctor and Rose (Billie Piper) inside the ship. In the issue, Eccleston told Christopher Middleton that he hadn't grown up with *Doctor Who*. "The low production values prevented me from believing it was real – unlike, say, *Star Trek*," he said bluntly. "I also felt the Doctors came across as these authority figures, lecturing me in their upper-middle-class accents. It seemed like everyone in outer space came from Surrey, rather than Salford, where I grew up."

◀ but in some ways Eccleston, who has two older brothers, lost his father to dementia before that.

"My eldest brother drove him from Salford to Leeds to see me in *Hamlet* in 2002. He was going 70mph on the motorway, and my dad tried to get out of the car." Did Ronnie know what his son had achieved? "His dementia didn't start to manifest until 1998, so he'd seen a lot. I think he knew I was going to be all right. He knew I'd made it."

Eccleston's triumphs – *Our Friends in the North*, *Hillsborough*, the rebirth of *Doctor Who* in 2005 and, since 2016, *The A Word*, to name a few – have included some of the most important moments in British television over the past 30 years. His latest TV project, *Come Home*, written by Emmy award winner Danny Brocklehurst, might join them. Eccleston brings his formidable intensity – and humour, we should note – to Greg, a Belfast mechanic's shop owner with three children whose wife Marie unaccountably leaves him to live in a terraced house a few streets away.

Troubled families are at the heart of much of his work and Eccleston has had his own difficulties. In 2015, he split from Mischka, his wife of four years and mother of his son Albert, six, and daughter Esme, four. "Yes, I'm divorced," he says. "Separated from my ex-wife. *Come Home* is about divorce. There's great humour in it, and there's great redemption. That was a reason that I wanted to do it, because we have a duty to offer hope, no matter how tough the vision. I want to be respectful of my children and their mum and my experience [of divorce] is redemptive. We parent our children together and separately, and she is a wonderful mother, and they're wonderful children, and my job to the end of my days is to protect them."

ECCLESTON WANTED TO involve his children in his preparation for *Macbeth*. "I had the kids up here the other week," he says. "I was chasing them round the grass there in front of the theatre, doing the invisible dagger speech." Then, after they went back to London, he got the call parents fear. Esme was ill with appendicitis and needed emergency surgery. "It was out of the blue," he says. "But I felt very calm, because I've got great trust in my children, particularly Esme. I call her Hurricane Esme. She was very brave, genuinely brave." Eccleston got to London in time to see Esme wheeled into surgery. "I looked at her, and then the doors closed and she went in there on her own. They told me she'd been talking about the dagger speech."

It's a point of honour for Eccleston that when he performs at the RSC, it will not be RP, but recognisably from the banks of the Irwell. "My mum's a fiercely intelligent woman, and a very sensitive woman, but she carries that thing that a lot of the working class of that generation have of not wanting to upset people. She said, 'Chris, you're not going to be like a Salford lad are you, doing Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon?' Ten years ago, I would have snapped at her because I was immature. But I said, 'Well, I am actually, Mum. Because it sounds just as good in our accent as it does in anybody else's.'"

So, he was horrified in rehearsal to find himself doing it the other way. "Our director Polly Findlay, who I trust with my life, said, 'Chris, when you do the soliloquies, you're talking posh. Do you know that?' And I was totally ashamed. There it is. I must be the chippiest actor in Britain. When I was doing, 'Is this a dagger which I see before me?', part of me just went, 'It's got to be done posh.' I felt like Judas."

Eccleston often talks about class. "People say I'm obsessed with class," he notes. "But the whole country is obsessed by class. It's like, it exists, but you're not supposed to mention it." He says he still half-bridles when he hears a public-school voice. "There is a kind of twitch, yes. And also, a kind of begrudging respect because they take status, they walk into a room going, 'I'm supposed to be here.' And I skulk around the edges; well, I don't do that now."

He must mix with a lot of posh people in the acting business? "I brush up with them, yes. I have friends from that background, and I'm middle class myself now. But I'll be honest with you, my friends tend to be more from a working-class background, and I'm sure their friends are more from a middle-class background." Is there still snobbery? "I think it exists. I think Gary Oldman is as fine an actor as Daniel Day-Lewis, but Gary is not double-barrelled. You might say Daniel has made better choices, but Gary Oldman's Oscar was massive to people from my background."

HE GIVES AN example of the prejudice he sees at work. "When the BBC did *The Hollow Crown* series, it was a huge investment in Shakespeare on the television. Now, without sounding arrogant, I'm a high-profile actor and I didn't get a call. Didn't get an audition. There's an assumption being made there about my accent, and my background. Or did they think I'm a crap actor?" Probably not.

"Right. So, I'm asking you now: what was the social background of the people who got all the lead roles in that BBC Shakespeare? What schools did they go to and why didn't somebody like myself get offered a lead? I can only think of Dave Morrissey that was in that, and he wasn't the lead! So, what's going on there? And how many actors of colour were the leads? One, I think [Sophie Okonedo played Queen Margaret]."

But what about the RSC? "My hackles always rise when I go to the National Theatre and the RSC, because I just see a sea of white faces. And there are far more white males in our company now than there are people of colour, or women. So, yes, this place has got to have a revolution. No more English Heritage. It's got to finish."

Eccleston has recently claimed he was blacklisted by the BBC after he was cast as Doctor Who when Russell T Davies brought the sci-fi show back to life in 2005 and then left after one series. "It was not a wise career move for me," he says. "I didn't work in this country for four years afterwards. But the generation of children who watched me are in their 20s now and they stop me all the time. And I get huge pleasure and satisfaction from their affection." ▶

> **"THE GENERATION WHO WATCHED ME STOP ME ALL THE TIME. I GET HUGE PLEASURE AND SATISFACTION FROM THEIR AFFECTION"**

◀ Now he explains just how unpleasant making the series was. "My relationship with my three immediate superiors – the showrunner, the producer and co-producer – broke down irreparably during the first block of filming and it never recovered. They lost trust in me, and I lost faith and trust and belief in them."

That must have been stressful, working on a show where the key relationships were so damaged? "Very. Some of my anger about the situation came from my own insecurity. They employed somebody [as the Doctor] who was not a natural light comedian. I think if you're setting up a huge series like that, the director has to be impeccable in setting the tone. Billie [Piper], who we know was and is brilliant, was very, very nervous and very, very inexperienced. So, you had that, and then you had me. Very, very experienced, possibly the most experienced on it, but out of my comfort zone."

Why speak about it now? "When I left, I gave my word to Russell T Davies that I wouldn't do anything to damage the show. But they did things to damage me. I didn't criticise anybody. I didn't issue a statement." Was Davies aware of the issues? "If you're the showrunner, you know everything. That's your job." Can I presume he doesn't have a relationship with Davies any more? "No. I never will have."

Eccleston has been feeling a little at odds with his surroundings since he moved to London in 1983 to study at the Central School of Speech and Drama. "It was only then that I realised I was working class. I started to meet young, middle-class women who were embracing feminism. My sexuality was emerging, and I felt because I was a big unit, northern, and very male, that my way of being was not acceptable. I remember wanting to be more like Morrissey or David Sylvian [androgynous lead singer with 80s group Japan]. You know, chiselled, angular and extremely sensitive. There was a great deal of confusion. Basically, I'm a big, hairy-arse fella, and at that time it just wasn't acceptable. Of course, what you learn when you get older is that actually women like that kind of masculinity if it's accompanied by – and I hate the label – femininity."

He is excited about the #Metoo moment that we are living through and the apparent change in the way women are treated.

"I'm just so glad to be alive now," he says. "And I'm so glad my daughter and son are going to benefit from what's happening." Has it made him reassess his own past and behaviour? "Yes, I have to. I can honestly say my behaviour has been laddish. I've not had sleepless nights but certainly some discomfort.

"I was brought up in a chauvinistic, misogynistic, patriarchal environment. That was the culture – not just the working classes – everywhere. My mum ran the house and she did the cooking and cleaning. She waited on us hand and foot, my dad and me and my two brothers. And in a sense, she didn't even question it. But my mum is instinctively a feminist, though she doesn't tweet Andrea Dworkin and she hasn't read *The Female Eunuch*. She is a very, very strong mum and has always been my guide."

He says he works better with women and goes out of his way to praise Polly Findlay, who has brought "a feminist agenda to *Macbeth*", and Andrea Harkin, director of *Come Home*. "I think there's a trigger in me about male authority figures," he says, "and particularly male middle-class authority figures if they have not had a good look at themselves, before having a good look at me."

I wonder how such a combative man deals with having children born into a different social class? "My children are very middle-class children," he says, "but I can give them things, like my dad's passion for language." Will you be reading from the dictionary? "When I walk on to the stage at the RSC, that's my dictionary. That's what I pass on to them."

"I WAS EXPERIENCED BUT OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE"

▼ Eccleston in 2010. "Pragmatic, witty, brave, intelligent, anarchic, heroic and caring," was how he described his Doctor to *RT* in 2005. "He cares about life in all its forms, and has a permanent sense of wonder at the world and everything in it."

HELLO TO NINE

Christopher Eccleston unpacks a bold new Doctor in *RT*'s *Doctor Who* launch supplement

PUBLISHED **26 MARCH 2005**

Why did you take the role?
I've always seen myself as a niche actor, who's been in dramas that have been critically acclaimed but have never got big audiences. A journalist once told me the roles I played were "comfort food for liberals", and I guess there was some truth in that – I let him out of the room alive, anyway! People are always telling me I'm too gloomy and can't do comedy – so taking a part in *Doctor Who* is a gamble, and I find that exciting. It could sink my career, or take it to another level.

Describe your Doctor.
He's childlike, contradictory, brutal to his enemies, and constantly restless and inquisitive.

What's the Doctor's relationship with his new companion Rose?
He loves her, simple as that. And she loves him. They're very similar, Rose and the Doctor: both carry a sense of loneliness. He allows her freedom – he's always encouraging her to experience things – but he expects a great deal of her, too. He's constantly telling her, "If you want to travel with me, don't become a burden."

How did you feel about doing so many blue-screen scenes, where you had to react to monsters and effects that you couldn't see?
I loved it. The great thing about acting is that you're allowed to behave like a child in terms of playing imaginary games. You can see blue-screen scenes as murder to play, or else you can view them as a challenge. The trick is to find fresh ways of exploring the moment, and offer up a variety of takes. I mean, that's the job, isn't it?

Do you feel cheated that your Doctor hasn't got a trademark scarf or hat?
Right from the start, I wanted to take on the challenge of playing an alien character without the benefit of any frills or extravagant costume; I felt I didn't need Billy Connolly's banana shoes and a feather boa to make the point. I liked the idea of him having a beaten-up leather jacket. I spotted a line in one of the early scripts that described the jacket as the kind of thing Terence Stamp would wear after a day's work on a market stall. Well, they didn't get Terence Stamp, they got me – Plug from the Bash Street Kids.

Does this show have lower status than your previous work because it's aimed at children?
Not at all. The eight-year-olds are the ones I want to reach! An adult probably won't have their life changed by watching a TV programme, whereas a child will. What I really hope, though, is that *Doctor Who* will be watched by children and adults together. I remember when I was little, there was something uniquely revealing about watching TV with my mum, dad and two brothers. I was astonished at the way two working-class lads like my brothers just loved the surrealism in *Monty Python*. If we can get that sort of thing going on, that would be the ideal result for me.

"I HOPE DOCTOR WHO WILL BE WATCHED BY CHILDREN AND ADULTS TOGETHER"

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

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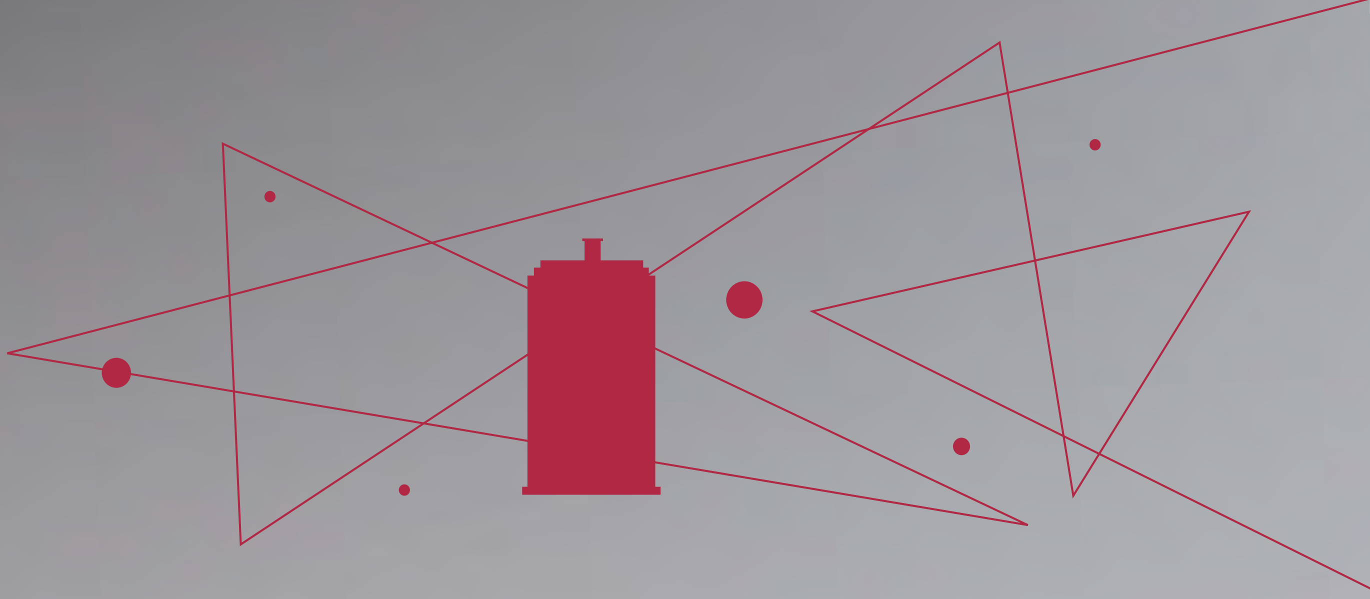
▲ The cover to a special *RT* supplement, produced to mark *Doctor Who*'s return



THE WANDERER RETURNS

As *Doctor Who* clocks up 60 years, **David Tennant** is back in control of the Tardis – but for how long? **Huw Fullerton** finds out about his triumphant return

PUBLISHED **25 NOVEMBER 2023**

David Tennant had it all. As the tenth Doctor he was a fan-favourite with a run of episodes that reached more than 13 million viewers in the UK – a record for the modern revival of *Doctor Who*, which almost rivalled its 1970s heyday. He left on his own terms in 2010 rather than being shoved aside for a younger, cooler star (in fact, the BBC wanted him to stay longer). His legacy set him up for lucrative convention appearances and fan worship for life, while his post-*Who* career is flourishing. So why risk it all by returning?

"I hadn't thought about it like that," Tennant laughs. "Thank God I made it to this point! It never really occurred to me to worry about that. Perhaps it should have done… but with Catherine [Tate] being part of it, and with Russell [T Davies] writing the scripts, I never actually worried about anything other than my own ability to run as fast as I used to."

In fairness, while the return of old favourites to a stage they've vacated can sometimes tarnish a legacy, Tennant's Doctor is a special case. Apart from Tom Baker, it's hard to think of a *Doctor Who* star who so captured the public's imagination. At the height of his career on the show, Tennant was plastered on magazine covers and lunchboxes; he was accosted in the street. In 2009, he was the BBC's Christmas ident. By the time he left, aged 39, one suspects he could have been reading the phone book to a Dalek and viewers would still have tuned in.

Happily this comeback, announced to great fanfare last year, is a little more involved than that. "The first conversation we had about it was very casual," Tennant recalls. "Russell and Catherine were talking about the notion of: 'What if we got the band back together for one last special? But David would never do it.' And I said, ▶

◀ David Tennant photographed by Matt Holyoak in 2008

▲ **CLASS OF '08**

David Tennant and Catherine Tate as Donna Noble, photographed by Mike Hogan in 2008 for *RT's* Series Four covers. Catherine Tate first appeared in the 2006 Christmas special before returning as a fully-fledged companion. "She's realised that life as a temp in Chiswick doesn't quite compare to adventures in time and space," Russell T Davies told *RT*. "Now she's determined to put that right."

"Donna's quite a force of nature, so she doesn't really take no for an answer," said Tate. "They really rounded Donna out from being a shouting fishwife to someone who's quite vulnerable and emotional."

"She brings out the Doctor's sense of fun, but she's brilliant at bringing him down to earth," added Davies. "I think Donna's the first one to truly understand him. He can be completely honest with her, admitting when he's scared, or lost, or powerless."

◀ 'What do you mean, I'd never do it? I'd do it in a shot. And then suddenly, we were back for three in a row.

"I mean, why not?" he laughs. "It was such a joyous time, and these are people I love as humans, and certainly love as people to work with. And *Doctor Who* is something that will always be hugely important to me."

In fact, there's a case to be made that the 52-year-old Tennant – who's speaking to us the day after his birthday, ever committed to the show – never really left *Doctor Who* behind in the first place. Yes, he's had many successes since – *Broadchurch*, *Good Omens*, *Des*, *Marvel's Jessica Jones* and *Staged* to name but a few – but he's always kept a foot in the Tardis door. After all, it was just three years after his dramatic regeneration that he teamed up with his successor Matt Smith for 2013's 50th-anniversary special.

"I was sort of a member of the guest cast on that, because it was Matt's show," says Tennant now. "It's different when you're in charge of the Tardis again. There's a lot more work to do. I remember on the 50th, going, 'Oh, this is easy. I used to have to learn far more lines than this!'"

Two years after that, Tennant was back headlining his own *Doctor Who* stories for a series of audio dramas co-starring – and this sounds familiar – ex-companion Catherine Tate. He's kept playing the Doctor that way ever since, lending his voice to audio plays and (more recently) video games starring his character.

This Doctor even looms large in Tennant's personal life. He married a guest actor on the series – Georgia Moffett, who appeared in a 2008 episode with him – which means his father-in-law is former fifth Doctor Peter Davison. He also has a police box cut-out in his garden. Given all this, it's hard to imagine why Davies and Tate thought this on-screen return would be a hard sell.

"The truth is, it's a rather lovely, benevolent, generous thing to be connected with. I love it. I always have, and I'm sure I always will," says Tennant. "I grew up with posters on my wall signed by Tom Baker. It's very peculiar that I should end up in the show that was, to a greater or lesser extent, the thing that inspired me to be in the profession I'm in.

"It runs through my life as if through a stick of rock, really. As you say, I met my wife on the set of *Doctor Who*, and I'm now a father. I've given up trying to resist the inevitability that *Doctor Who* will be following me around for the rest of time."

Instead, he's embraced it. So, this week he returns as the Doctor on BBC1 – but not the same one he played before. Originally, Tennant says the plan was for him and Tate to return for the anniversary in a flashback episode, set during their shared 2008 series and with a storyline completely different from the specials as they now exist.

"It would have been an unseen adventure from years before," he says. "Russell immediately had an idea for a story, which I'm not going to mention because I don't think it's yet seen the light of day. It certainly wouldn't have been part of an ongoing story. But I hope one day he does use it because it sounded great."

But Davies's return to the BBC fold as the new *Who* showrunner changed everything. "Then Russell decided he was coming back full-time and the whole thing blossomed," says Tennant. Suddenly, the one-off had turned into a trio of specials for *Doctor Who's* 60th anniversary.

Davies tells me later: "It was simply as many episodes as David and Catherine could do. If they had said, 'We've got time to make 12,' we would have made 12. If they had said, 'We've got time to make one,' then we'd have made one. But I think a one-off would have been a disappointment."

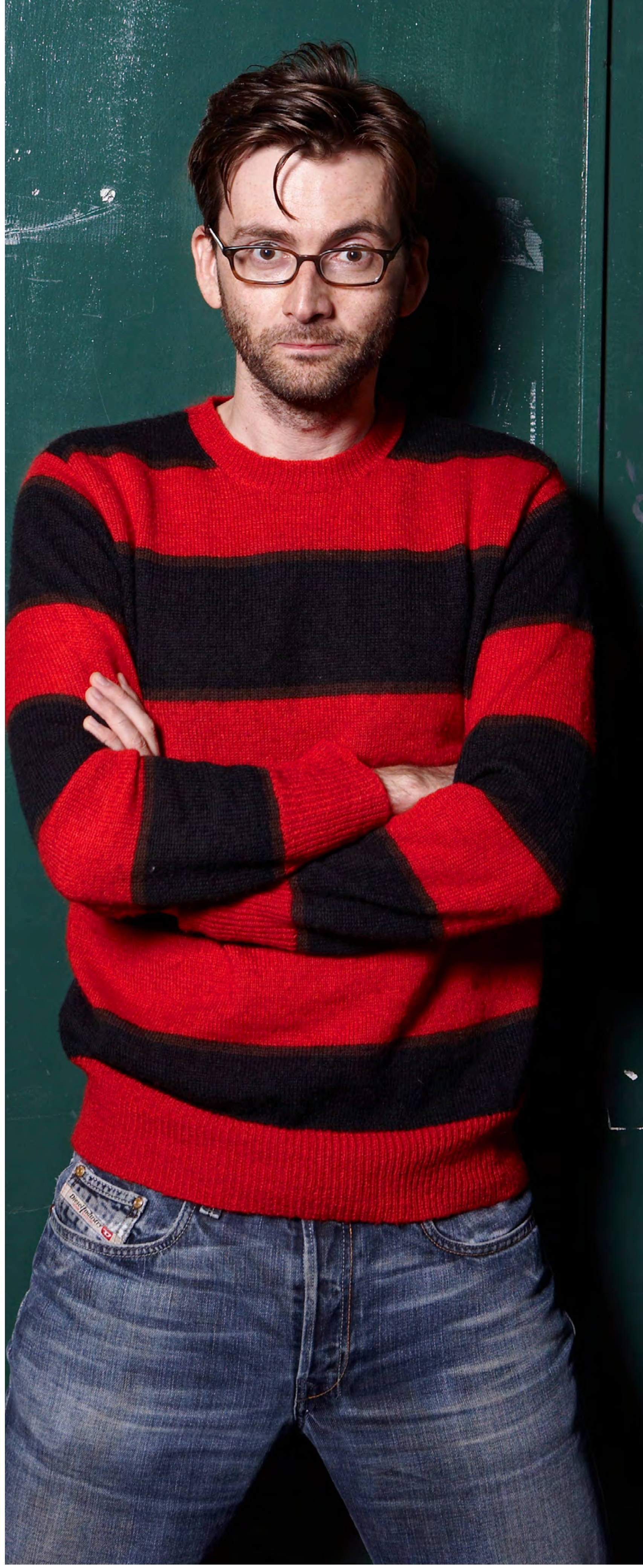
And it was a flashback no longer. Instead, Tennant plays a new (and official) incarnation of the Doctor that follows on from his younger self and the Doctors that came after – Matt Smith, Peter Capaldi and Jodie Whittaker – in a way that's woven into the story of the specials (titled *The Star Beast*, *Wild Blue Yonder* and *The Giggle*).

"That's part of what the Doctor himself is struggling with: why is he here?" says Tennant. "Why has he got this face back, and what might that mean? Though you're still in a recognisably *Doctor Who* world, and I think that's right and proper," he adds. "It gets you back into those stories that you know and love and recognise, with some elements in there that are unexpected."

In particular, he says that the second and third specials go in unusual directions for the series. "With two and three, Russell has written *Doctor Who* like I have never seen it before," he reveals. "He's come back to it with a whole new raft of ideas and enthusiasm. I'm just very chuffed to be able to be part of that."

But of course, he's not going to be part of it for long. Davies describes Tennant's new incarnation as a "Magnesium Doctor" – in other words, he burns brightly but not for long – because at the ▶

"I GREW UP WITH POSTERS ON MY WALL SIGNED BY TOM BAKER... DOCTOR WHO RUNS THROUGH MY LIFE AS IF THROUGH A STICK OF ROCK"



▶ David Tennant photographed at BBC Television Centre by Jude Edgington in 2009

"NCUTI WILL GET INTO THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY… I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL MAKE IT THAT FAR"

◀ end of the third special, he'll regenerate into new Doctor Ncuti Gatwa. The 31-year-old *Sex Education* star takes over for the Christmas special, followed by a full series next year (and beyond – he's already filming episodes that will be shown in 2025).

"I have seen a bit of Ncuti, and he's magnificent," Tennant says. "He's just got such an energy. He's so creative, and he's inventive, and he's funny, and he's a proper actor. I think he's going to be great.

"I've met Millie Gibson [new companion Ruby], and she seems lovely, too. I haven't got a chance to see any of her stuff yet, but they seem great together. I'm jealous of the adventure they've got in front of them."

When asked if he has any advice for his successor, Tennant seems vaguely horrified – "What would I say? I mean, literally, what would I say?" I suggest he might prepare Gatwa to return in about 18 years. "Well, he's young," Tennant laughs. "He'll get into the 100th anniversary, probably. I don't know if I'll make it that far. Though if I can keep running fast enough – I don't know. I never imagined that I would be sitting there for the 60th anniversary, talking about three specials we'd made. This show continues to surprise everyone involved with it."

Still, it must be hard to hand over the Tardis so soon after getting hold of it again. Was there a moment, just for a second, where he thought about snatching back the sonic screwdriver, barricading the studio and staying on for a full series?

Even as a lifelong fan, he says not. "It was never on the table," Tennant says firmly. "The story – well, as soon as I start to talk about this, we get into the area of spoilers, so I'm not going to say any more. All I know is that I'm excited and jealous of everything that Ncuti has in front of him. And I can't wait to enjoy it as a viewer, because I think he's magnificent."

He laughs. "I think they thought, 'Let the old man run around for a minute – and then we'll get a nice, young bloke in.'"

▼ Life after the Doctor: David Tennant photographed in London by Matt Holyoak in 2012

TIME OF MY LIFE

While making his second series, **David Tennant** tells *RT* about his days filming *Doctor Who*

PUBLISHED **31 MARCH 2007**

It takes nine months to film a series. At the start, is there a sense of being waved off on a train by family and friends?
It does feel like coming back to school. You never do that as an actor: you do a little job and move on. It was weird coming back, but very pleasant seeing all the same people and going into the same old routine.

You have a flat in Cardiff. What do you pack for those nine months?
Mercifully, I didn't really have to pack, because I didn't have to move out at the end of last year. The flat gets kept on, so I now have two fully functioning flats [the other is in London]. The danger will be when this finishes, because I've doubled up everything. I don't know where it's all going to go. I might have to have a large car-boot sale.

When do you start work each day?
Filming usually kicks off at 8am – assuming it's not a night shoot – which means you have to be here just after seven. I live about half an hour from the studios, so I usually get up around six.

Does that take a while to get used to?
It's funny, you get into that routine quite quickly. Also, because of the nature of filming, that routine keeps being messed up because you go to night shoots, when you have to quickly rewire your body clock and try to get used to sleeping all day and waking up at 5pm to go to work. You just have to be continually flexible.

What's the hardest part of being the Doctor?
That's quite a hard question. This year's been harder generally because we've done more nights and more odd hours and slightly further afield locations, just because the scripts have been more ambitious. The show keeps pushing itself and Russell [T Davies] keeps pushing what's achievable. And we've been away on location: down to Wells in Somerset, the Globe, Warwick…

▲ Knock four times… David Tennant photographed by Matt Holyoak in 2009 for his Doctor's finale, *The End of Time*

"THIS IS SUCH AN EXTRAORDINARY TIME AND IT'S FLYING BY"

What was filming at the Globe like?
It was great. The curious part was, because we couldn't get in until after the show finished at nine, we would start filming at about 11pm and shoot through the night. But there are daytime scenes in the Globe as well, so as the sun came up, we had to switch to the daytime scenes. Just as you were getting a bit weary around 6am, you had to switch to a whole other mode. The very nature of *Doctor Who* is that it's all quite high-energy. You can't allow yourself to droop.

How do you keep that energy up?
Oh, I don't know. Black coffee? That's the character, that's the job, and it's the nature ▶

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▲ Friends and foes for the new Doctor, in an extended gatefold cover from 2006, shot by Matt Holyoak: David Tennant, Billie Piper and classic series companions Elisabeth Sladen (Sarah Jane Smith) and K•9 flee a parade of alien menaces. *Run!*

▲ CH-CH-CHANGES

"I'm friends with a seven-year-old and she was so upset that Chris was leaving," Billie Piper told *RT* in 2005. "She couldn't understand it or accept the change and I was worried about that. But within three minutes of working with David, I thought, 'Don't worry about it. It'll be fine.' They'll love him."

◀ of these kinds of scripts as well; that's what you thrive on. Often the Doctor's energy is what powers a scene, so you've got to match that. I don't find it difficult, particularly. The very energy that comes off the script is what inspires you.

How do you fill time between scenes?
There are usually more lines to learn, new scripts arriving, or people like yourself to speak to. The time tends to get filled up.

How do you manage the day-to-day stuff like shopping and bills?
That's the stuff that I find problematic. It's the answer to your question about the hardest part of the job: keeping normal life going, remembering which bill hasn't been paid.

What about shopping? When did you last go out and buy a CD?
I tend to get my CDs and DVDs via the internet. There's a little spot just outside the men's loos, just at the back of the studios here, where the wireless internet comes down from the office upstairs, so I spent about four weeks prior to Christmas crouched outside the gents' toilets with my laptop, trying to get into various shopping websites, making sure I had something to take home to the family.

Presumably you now get recognised – is it disconcerting?
You acclimatise, but it was a bit of a shock at first. *Doctor Who* is a different level of attention. Billie and I got chased through the traffic once in a car. You expect paparazzi to do that, but when it's normal people you start to think the world's gone a bit mad. You're literally having a car chase and some cabbie's going, "Dahn't worry. We'll run this red light!" But I've had very few bad experiences.

Any funny stories?
A certain BBC presenter who I'd never met before came up to me at a party and went, "Hi, how you doing?" And I went, "Oh, hi, all right?" I knew who she was and I assumed she was just being friendly. We were chatting away: "That time we met..." and I'm thinking, "No, we haven't!" Then she stopped and said, "That was Christopher Eccleston, wasn't it?" Ha ha! She was mortified!

Do the days ever feel repetitive?
No, that's why nine months shoot by. I can't believe I'm nearly finished! We started on 1 July. It does seem a long time ago that Catherine Tate and I were doing the Christmas episode. I think, jings, this is such an extraordinary time and it's flying by, and in my dotage I'm going to look back and think, that was the blink of an eye!

NICK GRIFFITHS

THE FIFTH ELEMENT

Peter Davison discusses his return as the fifth Doctor for Children in Need's *Time Crash*

PUBLISHED **10 NOVEMBER 2007**

The idea of coming back to play the Doctor was mentioned to me casually a few months ago: would I be interested? And I said, 'Yes!'

I didn't really have to think about it, partly because it gives me such credibility with my children. They're huge fans of the new show. Before it came back, they were huge fans of the old *Doctor Who* videos they saw of me – but they very quickly changed their allegiance to the new Doctor!

I didn't realise then what form my role would take, just that there would be some kind of Children in Need appearance; a little scene. But it turned out to be a brilliant little scene.

You do obviously get a sense of coming home, but it was very much the new series. There are similar things: the Tardis door's there, and the inside layout certainly pays deference to the original set, though it's a vastly more complex and superior affair. The one we had was literally wheeled in every week.

But things broke off in the same way they did when I had the Tardis, because you're rushing around twiddling switches, pulling levers – anything you can grab hold of. Those lights beneath the Tardis console look fantastic, but they melt the glue, so bits drop off more easily.

There was a moment at first when I walked on, and felt that my costume was a little out of place in the surroundings. I suppose mine is eminently recognisable, whereas David Tennant's is just a suit. I did warn him, however, that he might be making a mistake by buttoning it up. I could still get into the coat; I just couldn't do it up!

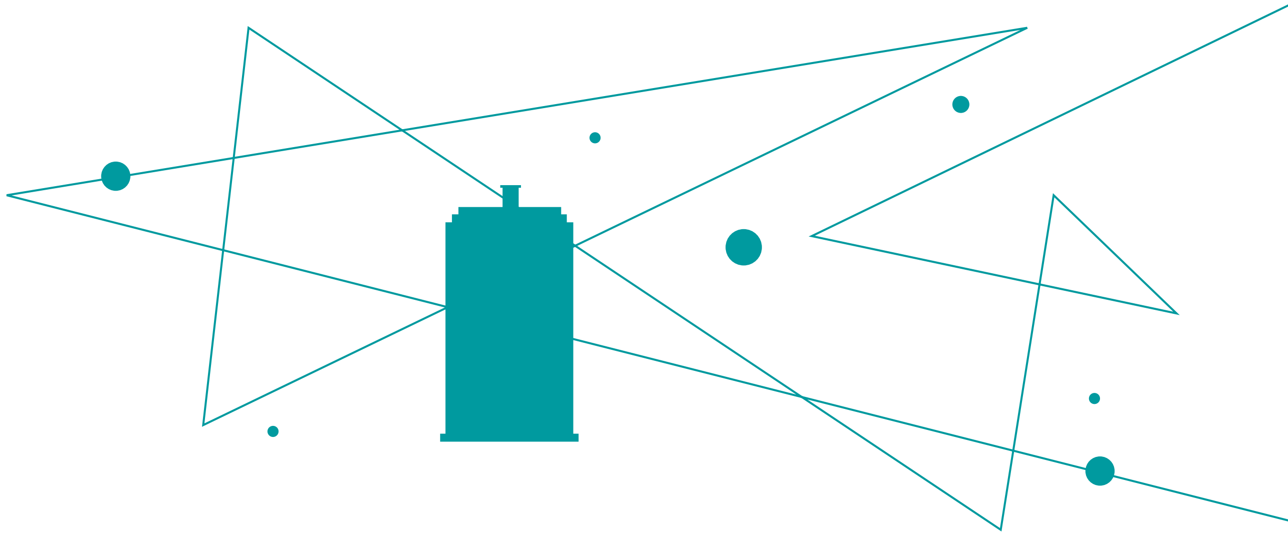
David and I very much got on and did the scene. I only found out afterwards that he was a fan of my Doctor, because he sent me a very nice text saying that he was at first a bit tongue-tied. I wasn't aware of that at all!

▲ FRIENDS REUNITED

"We've always gone for the assumption that the Doctors don't get on," *Time Crash* writer Steven Moffat told *RT*. "That doesn't quite happen here. David's Doctor tries to convince Peter's: 'No, I really am you!' David's Doctor is thrilled to see his old self again, and Peter's Doctor is grumpier than people somehow remember him, so we get a little grumping around from him."

▲ Hats off to Peter Davison!

◀ Centre images: Outtakes from *RT*'s cover shoot for *Time Crash*, photographed by Mike Hogan



THE CHIC GEEK

Matt Smith thought he was going to be a footballer but ended up embracing Einstein to become a Time Lord. **E Jane Dickson** finds out how the new Doctor is settling in

PUBLISHED **3 APRIL 2010**

REGENERATING IS A tough gig. Filling the shoes of the most popular Doctor in the history of the world's most popular sci-fi show is hard enough. When you have precisely 65 minutes to foil your first intergalactic threat, you need to hit the ground running.

"Yeah, no pressure," laughs Matt Smith, the 27-year-old actor who came, appropriately enough, from nowhere to scoop the title role in the new series of *Doctor Who*. "My Doctor is like a new-born lamb, trying to discover what these limbs are on his body, but he's straight into active service. It's a bit like trying to save the world with flu."

It seems a safe bet that eight-year-olds all over Britain will soon be plaguing their mums for a bow tie. There's a fogey-ish charm to the 11th Doctor (Smith prefers "geek chic") with his worn tweeds and flapping fringe. Smith's own manner is a likeable blend of puppyish and professional, with a tendency to talk in italics. Playing the Doctor, he points out, is a little like "giving your Hamlet". You have to make the part your own.

"I mean," he says, "the Doctor has always been, and he always will be. But how many parts are there in world TV that could be played by a 27-year-old or a 60-year-old? It's been wonderful, just exploring the *multitudes* of him, but it takes a while to evolve a strong identity."

A graduate of the University of East Anglia, where he studied drama and creative writing, Smith has his own way of accessing this enigmatic character. "I had the part six months prior to shooting anything on camera – and for much of that time it was all a big secret – so I had to find a way of channelling my energy and excitement, my lust, as it were, for creating this persona. I was thinking, 'Who in the world has a brain and a silliness which is close to the Doctor?' and ▶

◀ Shining star: 11th Doctor Matt Smith – shot by Mark Harrison in 2010

◀ **BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS**

Karen Gillan as Amy Pond with Matt Smith as the Doctor, shot by Mark Harrison on the Tardis set at Upper Boat Studios in February 2010. "They're like brother and sister," Karen told *RT* later that year. "He's quite protective of her and they bicker like siblings do, but ultimately they'd do anything for each other. Sometimes, though, she's attracted to him, and that's when things get a bit more complicated. I think he basically still sees her as the little Amelia he met when she was seven. So when she kisses him, he's like, 'Ooh, this is all wrong,' and she's like, 'Why isn't he reciprocating?' So she pushes it a bit, just to test her power. But in the morning, she's back to being his annoying little sister again."

◀ then I saw that photograph of Albert Einstein poking his tongue out and it just clicked. I found this book of quotes by Einstein – which I recommend as a life choice, he was such an insightful man – and I started writing short stories about Einstein and the Doctor, where the Doctor was getting irritated with the great man's buffoonery. He'd be saying, 'Come on, Albert, keep up!' and I think that, more than anything, was my way in to the part."

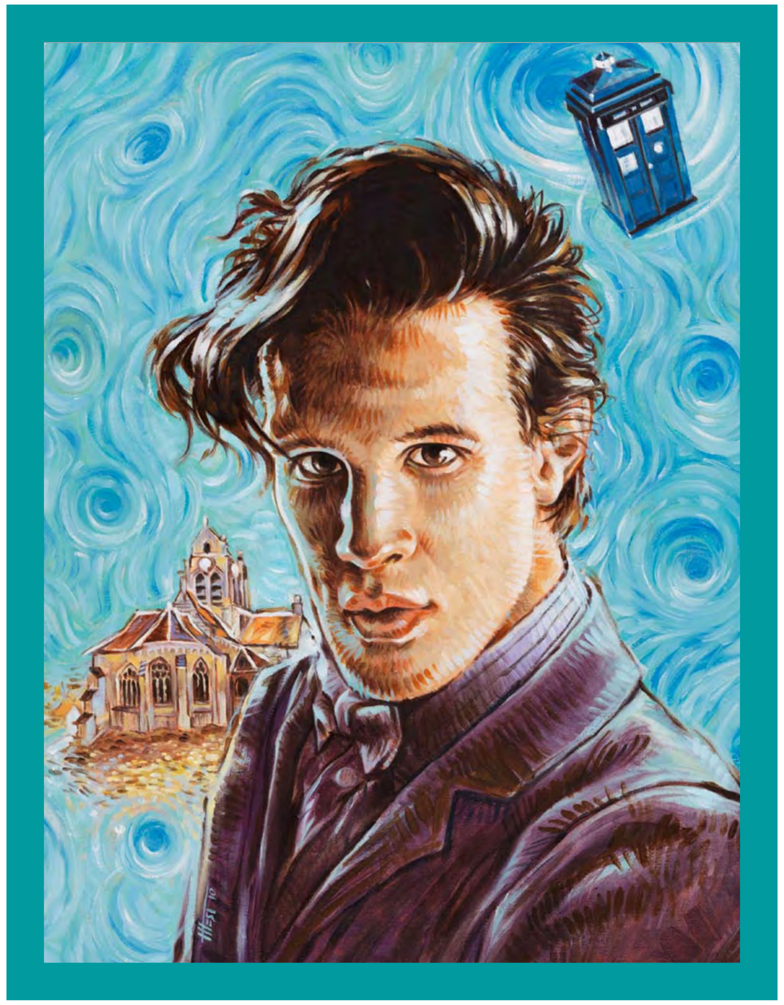
With new head writer and executive producer Steven Moffat on board, the role could be tailored to Smith's own personality as the season developed. "There's a slight sort of madness and a great tenderness to the Doctor. I don't know if that's me, but he's also very clumsy and that's definitely me," says Smith. "It helps, too, that I've always been completely fascinated by the time/space continuum. I was never that into sci-fi – I grew up in that barren age when *Doctor Who* was taken off the air – but I once shared a house with an obscenely clever guy who was doing his doctorate for Cambridge on the subject of time, and ever since, it has seemed to me the great, omnipotent force of the world. The new series plays so cleverly with the concept of time travel. I don't know how Steven does it; you think there's no way he's going to be able to join those dots and tie the whole thing up but, by God, he does. For me, to go to work and be in touch, on a daily basis, with that crazy, time-bending magic is just incredible."

"I STARTED WRITING SHORT STORIES ABOUT EINSTEIN AND THE DOCTOR"

Smith needed all his enthusiasm – supplemented by weapons-grade Vitamin C – to carry him through the series' seven-month shooting schedule at Cardiff HQ, where he featured in practically every scene. "If you're ill, it's just tough. I think your head would have to be falling off before you could take a day off."

Fortunately, Smith is used to pushing himself to the limit. Long before he thought of acting ▶

◀ as a career, he was set to be a professional footballer. Selected for Northampton Town under 11 and 12s, Nottingham Forest under 12, 13 and 14s and Leicester City under 15s and 16s, he was on course for the premier league – he remembers playing against Jermaine Pennant who went on to play for Liverpool – when a serious back injury knocked him out of the game. “That was a difficult time for me, for sure. But you know, what doesn't kill you… And my dad was always very keen to drill into me that it's not the disappointment that counts, it's how you react to it.”



▼ A Van Gogh-inspired portrait of Matt Smith by Chris West, commissioned by *RT* for the episode *Vincent and the Doctor*

Smith was switched onto acting by Jerry Hardingham, his drama teacher at Northampton School for Boys. “I can remember his first drama lesson,” says Hardingham. “He possessed this raw power and presence. I knew that if that power could be harnessed, he could go places. I cast him in *Twelve Angry Men* while he was on holiday, without auditioning him. I rang his mum and told her to tell him he's doing it; he hasn't got a choice! He did and he loved it – he got a taste for it.”

In other words, Smith discovered his soccer skills were eminently transferable. “So much of what I do, instinctually, as an actor, comes, I'm sure, from my footballing background,” he says. “There's supposed to be this divide between art and physical culture, but I look at someone like Zinedine Zidane and I see the pure expression of artistic grace. The courage needed to be a great sportsman applies equally to art in general and acting in particular. So much of acting is about summoning courage and confidence and, as in sport, there are lots of elements of your life that have to be put on a back burner because there's only one real focus. Not to mention the need for timing, rhythm and balance.”

Rising through the ranks of the National Youth Theatre, Smith appeared in the second run of Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*, the play that was a springboard for a new wave of British talent including James Corden, Russell Tovey and Dominic Cooper. “They were in the first run,” Smith points out, scrupulously. “I've just been working with James [for episode 11 of *Doctor Who*, *The Lodger*] – God, he's funny – and he's constantly going on about how he was doing *History Boys* in New York and I was doing it in Milton Keynes. Nothing against Milton Keynes” – Smith seems genuinely concerned not to give offence – “there's a wonderful theatrical culture there, but New York it ain't.”

Does he hope to follow previous Doctors David Tennant and Christopher Eccleston to Hollywood? “Why the hell not?” says Smith. “I could do with a bit of poolside. I'd take my mum – she'd love it.”

Certainly he's keen to pursue new projects in shooting breaks from *Who*, but he's not going anywhere before mastering the sonic screwdriver. “I've broken four of them,” he confesses. “I like to have it about my person at all times, just twirling it around and flicking it. It's all part of the magic, isn't it?”

For Smith, for now, *Doctor Who* is where he wants to be. “I feel very safe, literally safe, in the Tardis,” he says. “I can't quite explain it. Maybe it's because I know that once it lands, the adventure is about to begin.”

> “I LIKE TO HAVE THE SONIC SCREWDRIVER ABOUT MY PERSON AT ALL TIMES, JUST TWIRLING IT AROUND AND FLICKING IT”

CHIMING ELEVEN

RT catches a ride with Matt Smith as he prepares to say goodbye to *Doctor Who*

PUBLISHED **7 DECEMBER 2013**

Matt Smith is sitting in a BMW on his way to the ExCeL Centre in London's Docklands. He's sporting a neatly cut crop, jeans a jumper from Acne, a leather jacket from D&G, a scarf from Marc Jacobs and some slightly alarming socks.

We're conducting this exit interview the day before his barnstorming performance in the 50th birthday episode. He only has what remains of the year as the official Doctor. While we're talking, you can almost feel him moving on.

What's it like playing the Doctor? “Everything changed. It's all consuming – and that affects the rhythm of your life. Now, however, it's settling down a little.” What can we expect from his final episode? “I can't tell you. It was a great shoot – a sad one for me, but I think it'll be a fitting send-off and a fitting introduction for Peter [Capaldi].”

Any regrets? “None. I think if I was going to choose to spend a couple of years in anyone's body, why not live it as the Doctor? He's going to have more fun than almost anyone else alive.”

The rest of the team is going to miss him desperately. “You will not find anyone with a negative story about Matt,” the show's writer Steven Moffat tells us. “The producer, Marcus Wilson, gets him on set as quickly as possible because the crew literally works faster when he's there. He's the life and soul, greeting the guest actors like the perfect host, even when he's feeling broody, unhappy, tired or sulky.”

Moffat thinks Smith is the most successful actor yet when it comes to capturing the enormous age of the Doctor. “Matt is a youthful envelope but he has an old soul,” he muses. “In real life Matt is very cool. The Doctor would like to think he's cool, but he isn't.”

It being the time of his passing as the Doctor – of a little death no matter how the character lives on in another body – we feel it appropriate to ask Matt if he's had any profound existential thoughts as a result. Does an on-screen death teach you what's important in life? He thinks for a moment.

▲ A Doctor and an Impossible Girl: Matt Smith with Jenna Coleman as Clara in 2013 – photographed by Mark Harrison

> “DOCTOR WHO IS ALL CONSUMING… THAT AFFECTS THE RHYTHM OF YOUR LIFE”

“That question starts off on the wrong foot… I think the point is the endeavours we make towards the discovery of our existence through art or love or family. They are at least the things that make us realise we exist.”

He calls himself an atheist, but if he met God, what would he like to say? He laughs. “If there was a God, what would I ask? I'd ask – can I have my money back?” And he bids a warm farewell as the ExCeL swallows him up. **STEPHEN ARMSTRONG**

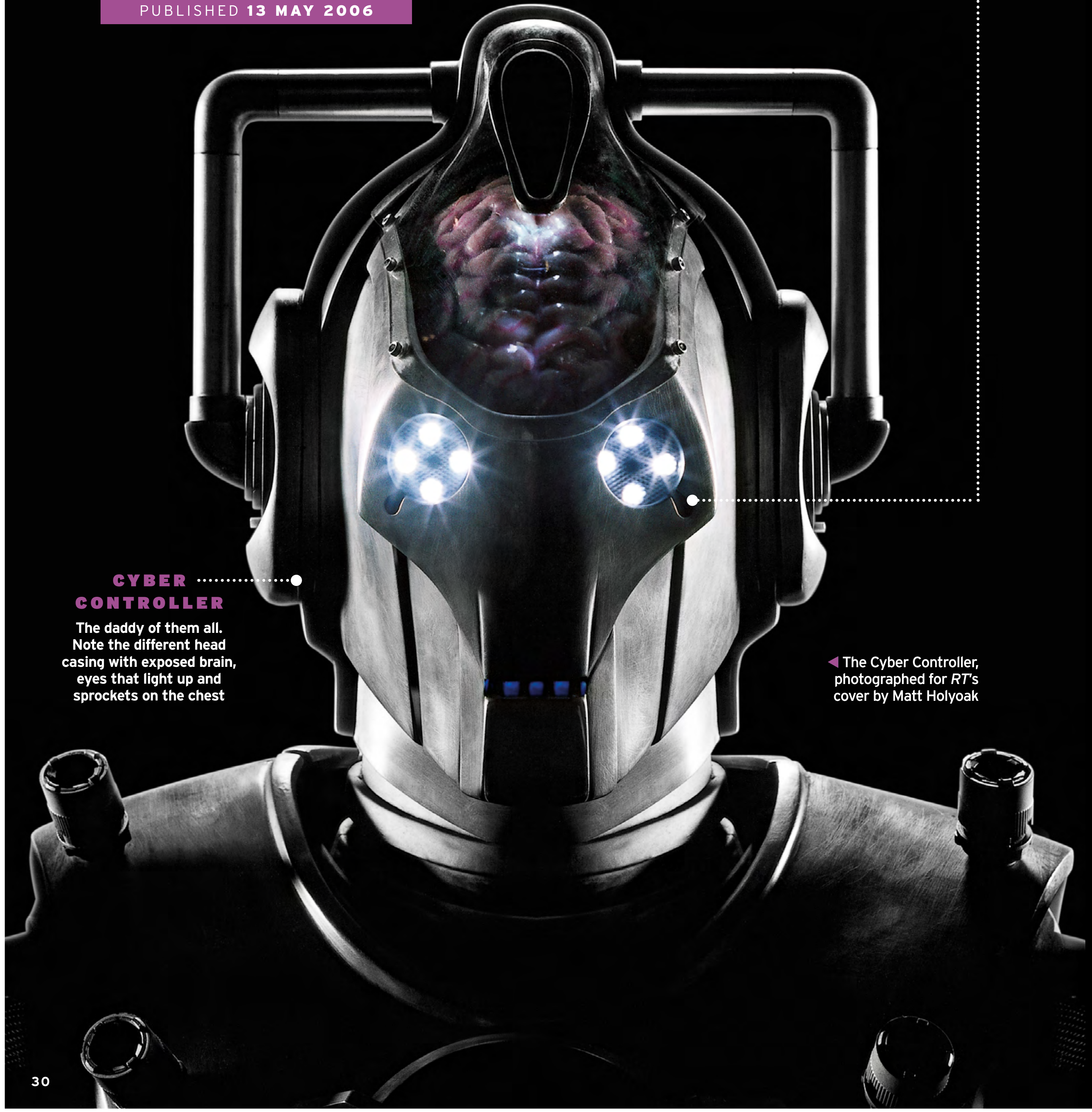
HEAVY METAL

Production designer **Edward Thomas** and prosthetics designer **Neill Gorton** explain how the Cybermen were reimagined for a new era

PUBLISHED **13 MAY 2006**

OIL DUCTS

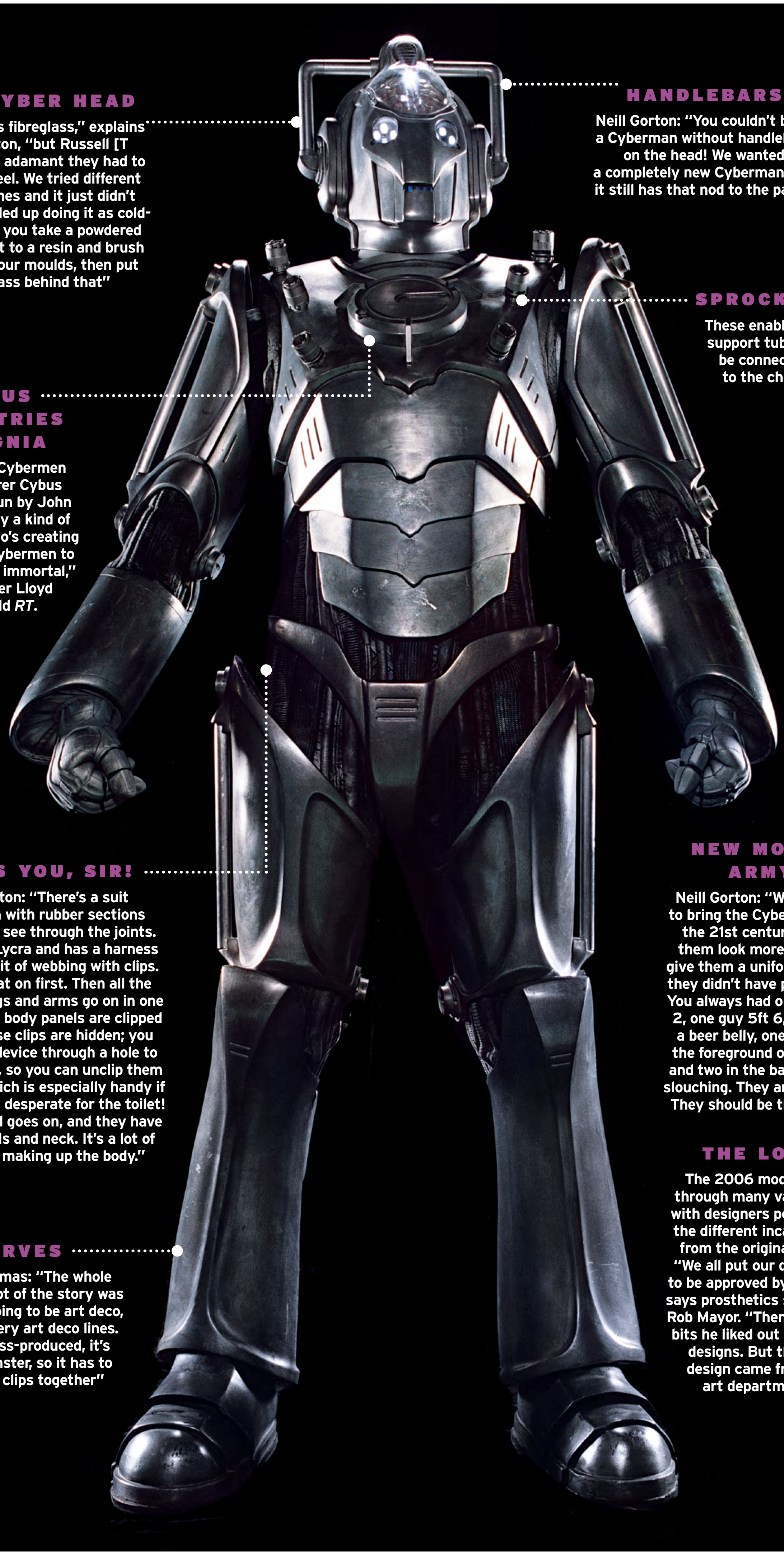
"You might notice that they've got oil ducts in the eyes," says Edward Thomas. "It's supposed to be an oil duct, but it gives the image of a tear. They are sad creatures. There are human beings inside that have been taken out of their bodies and encased in these metal cases. They'll never escape."



CYBER CONTROLLER

The daddy of them all. Note the different head casing with exposed brain, eyes that light up and sprockets on the chest

◀ The Cyber Controller, photographed for *RT*'s cover by Matt Holyoak



THE CYBER HEAD

"The head is fibreglass," explains Neill Gorton, "but Russell [T Davies] was adamant they had to look like steel. We tried different paint finishes and it just didn't work. We ended up doing it as cold-cast metal: you take a powdered metal, add it to a resin and brush that into your moulds, then put fibreglass behind that"

HANDLEBARS

Neill Gorton: "You couldn't build a Cyberman without handlebars on the head! We wanted a completely new Cyberman, but it still has that nod to the past."

SPROCKETS

These enable life-support tubes to be connected to the chest

CYBUS INDUSTRIES INSIGNIA

The logo of Cybermen manufacturer Cybus Industries, run by John Lumic. "I play a kind of evil genius who's creating an army of Cybermen to make himself immortal," actor Roger Lloyd Pack told *RT*.

SUITS YOU, SIR!

Neill Gorton: "There's a suit underneath with rubber sections that you can see through the joints. It's made of Lycra and has a harness stitched into it of webbing with clips. They put that on first. Then all the panels, the legs and arms go on in one piece, and the body panels are clipped around. Those clips are hidden; you poke a little device through a hole to reach the clip, so you can unclip them really fast, which is especially handy if a Cyberman is desperate for the toilet! Then the head goes on, and they have silicone hands and neck. It's a lot of pieces – 13 making up the body."

NEW MODEL ARMY

Neill Gorton: "We wanted to bring the Cybermen into the 21st century, make them look more real and give them a uniformity that they didn't have previously. You always had one guy 6ft 2, one guy 5ft 6, one with a beer belly, one stood in the foreground overacting and two in the background, slouching. They are an army. They should be the same."

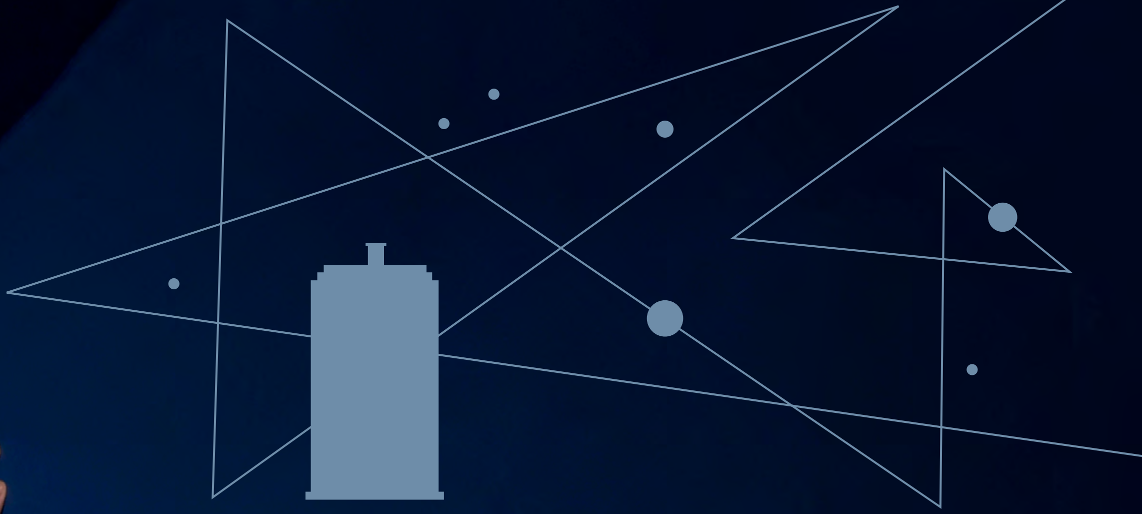
CURVES

Edward Thomas: "The whole design concept of the story was that it was going to be art deco, so we kept very art deco lines. And it's mass-produced, it's a metal monster, so it has to feel as if it clips together"

THE LOOK

The 2006 model went through many variations, with designers poring over the different incarnations from the original series. "We all put our designs in to be approved by Russell," says prosthetics supervisor Rob Mayor. "Then he picked bits he liked out of certain designs. But the final design came from the art department."

▶ Peter Capaldi photographed for his debut by Jude Edginton in 2014



MAN IN A BLUE BOX

As a child, Peter Capaldi played *Doctor Who* in a bedroom wardrobe – **Alison Graham** catches up with him now he has a Tardis of his own

PUBLISHED **23 AUGUST 2014**

Peter Capaldi snorts with laughter as he describes the "BBC Entertainment version of *The Ipcress File*" that surrounded his unveiling as the 12th Doctor in a glittery, dry-iced, peak-time BBC1 show last August.

"There was a lot of cloak-and-dagger stuff on the way to the studio; the BBC genuinely felt it had to maintain secrecy so I was taken to a car park, dropped off by one car and put in another car with a blanket over my head. For all I knew, because I couldn't see or hear anything, there might have been no one there and it could all have been a load of baloney."

Surely acting like a spy in a Len Deighton novel must have been exciting as he shrugged on the mantle of his lifelong hero last year after weeks of fervid speculation? "Yes, if you're 15… But you just have to go, 'OK, yeah, if you insist.'"

If this makes Capaldi, whose first, feature-length adventure is unveiled this Saturday, sound a bit grumpy and grudging, it shouldn't. ▶

▼ Peter Capaldi leafs through a copy of *RT's Doctor Who Tenth Anniversary Special*, in a 2014 portrait by Jude Edginton. "Your Special has certainly made the year for *Dr Who* fans," a 15-year-old Capaldi wrote in a reader's letter printed in 1974. Awww, thanks!

◀ He's cheerfully funny and a blessedly good talker. We're here because Capaldi – an actor, Oscar-winning film-maker, writer, artist – has seized one of British TV's great roles at the age of 56. He's the oldest ever Doctor, a devotee of the show from its shaky black-and-white beginnings, who takes over the Tardis after two cute "boyfriend Doctors", David Tennant and Matt Smith.

When we meet, on a fetid, broiling hot day in London, he's almost completed filming his first series and is striding onto the *Doctor Who* publicity treadmill that inevitably accompanies what is now, inescapably, a global "brand" sold around the world. It's a planet-spanning success – last year's 50th anniversary special was broadcast simultaneously in 94 countries and Capaldi's launch includes *Doctor Who's* first-ever "world tour" of five continents in 12 days. "These markets are really, really crazy for *Doctor Who*. It's huge in South Korea and gigantic in Mexico," says the new Doctor.

But first, the *Radio Times* photoshoot. Capaldi arrives, breezy and smiling to shake the hands of everyone in the room before throwing himself into various poses for the photographer and *RT's* art team. "As you have seen today, I just go where people tell me, because that's the nature of the operation," he says later over lunch, as we both dig into a huge bowl of chips. ("How are we going to get through that? That is a huge amount of chips, a *vat* of chips.")

We know each other, a bit. I first interviewed him in 2006 on the set of *The Thick of It*, at the height of my unwholesome crush on the long streak of bile that was sweary government apparatchik Malcolm Tucker, one of Capaldi's defining characters. We've since hailed one another across crowded rooms, mainly at Bafta Awards dos from which he has emerged, to my continued bafflement, empty-handed (nominations, but no prizes, for *The Thick of It* and *The Hour*).

Never mind, because now he's the Doctor. As a child growing up in Glasgow with his Irish mum and Italian dad, he was a fan, so did he ever actually see himself, all grown up, as the two-hearted time-traveller? "I never thought I would be in the frame for it because the Doctors were getting younger and younger and that was fine."

A call from his agent tilted his world towards the Tardis. "She said, 'How would you feel about being the new Doctor Who?' And I just started laughing very joyfully. It was such a wonderful idea and even if it never went any further, just getting that phone call was great fun."

But it did, eventually, go much further when he auditioned at showrunner Steven Moffat's house. (Moffat has said since that Capaldi's was the only name on his 12th Doctor wish-list.) Not much later, as he filmed the BBC1 drama *The Musketeers* in Prague, he phoned his agent. "She said, 'Hello Doctor,' and that was great. But I couldn't tell anyone. I was dressed as Cardinal Richelieu and I couldn't say a word to anyone on the set, so I just had to go off into a corner."

And he had to lie. "I wandered around Prague singing the *Doctor Who* theme to myself with a great beard, which I had to shave off for the presentation of myself as Doctor Who. I had to explain why I'd shaved off the beard so I told them I was doing a pilot for a new show with [*The Thick of It* creator] Armando Ianucci."

When we meet, Capaldi is just finishing his 28th consecutive week of filming. He works in Cardiff throughout the week and returns home to north London at weekends. "*Doctor Who* is a very intense working experience because, like most things at the BBC, there's not quite enough money and money is time and there's really not quite enough time to do it, so you are always on the hoof, pedalling as fast as you can."

The budget issue has flapped around *Doctor Who* since its inception in 1963. Most recently, Moffat insisted there'll never be any on-screen evidence of tight funding but admitted the 50th anniversary episode was "extraordinarily difficult. We were making a feature-length *Doctor Who* on the schedule and budget for an hour."

So after a couple of spry, tail-wagging Doctors, will Capaldi's be mature and sage-like à la William Hartnell? "I think I'm a more grown-up Doctor, but he's still mirthful. He is serious when he needs to be but he's still quite comic."

On his very first day of filming, Capaldi had to step out of the Tardis: "I'd never been in the police box before, apart from the wardrobe at home when I was a kid pretending it was a police box. I was shocked to find that it *was* just like a wardrobe, like something your dad had made. And there was a prop bloke and a smoke machine. When I had to step out of it, it was quite nerve-racking, but delightful as well."

Not that Capaldi thinks he's found his feet just yet, even as the end of the first series hurtles towards him. "I don't know if it's quite fallen into place yet. I think it's a mistake to get it to click, to get into a groove. I've tried to avoid finding a way to do it and then just repeating that. I'm trying all the time to see what works and what doesn't work, though I'm trying to bring back some of the Doctor's mystery and strangeness, which is hard to do given that the show is 50 years old." Even as a lifelong fan he insists: "I'm not an expert on *Doctor Who*, despite being a kid who was really into it."

Capaldi is, of course, a serious man who's serious about his work (he's been all over British TV for decades in *The Crow Road*, *Prime Suspect 3*, *Peep Show*, *The Devil's Whore*, *The Vicar of Dibley*) but mercifully he doesn't imprint *Doctor Who* with great cosmic, existential purpose. "*Doctor Who* is monsters, corridors to run up and down, sets that shake occasionally, some over-the-top acting, some under-the-top acting, some magic, some Grimm's fairy-tale darkness."

"I'M TRYING TO BRING BACK SOME OF THE DOCTOR'S MYSTERY AND STRANGENESS, WHICH IS HARD"

Until his early teens he avidly watched the Saturday-evening adventures of the first four Doctors – William Hartnell, Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee, Tom Baker – until he found other pursuits as a teenager. "I loved it from the start and stayed with it until I was 17, then, probably about halfway through Tom Baker's reign, I checked out."

Young Peter Capaldi even wrote a letter to *Radio Times* when he was 15, praising our "excellent *Dr Who* Special". He cringes when I bring this up: "Yes, that's embarrassing, do you really want to see your 15-year-old self?"

In the old days, *Doctor Who* episodes could ▶

▼ EQUAL FOOTING

Peter Capaldi and Jenna Coleman, shot for *RT* by Richard Grassie in 2014. "I'd no idea who would take over from Matt Smith," Coleman told *RT's* Andrew Duncan that year. "When I was told it was Peter, it was one of those 'aha, that makes sense – genius' kind of moments.' " Capaldi praised his co-star. "It has no equivalent in TV or fiction, a friendship between an alien creature and an extremely bright, clever and brave young woman. I was so lucky it was Jenna because it might not have worked with anyone else."

▲ Sharp dresser Peter Capaldi photographed by Ian Derry at the 2016 *Radio Times* Covers Party

"DOCTOR WHO IS A BIG, DAFT POPULAR TV SHOW WITH LOTS OF WONDERFUL THINGS IN IT"

◀ not be subjected to the pinprick levels of scrutiny they receive today from fans. "Nowadays, with DVDs and all that sort of thing, things are available and you can watch programmes over and over again, but in those days, that wasn't the case. They went out on a Saturday evening and if you missed them, you missed them. If you saw them, you saw them, you couldn't rewind them, you couldn't see the joins, which is why I don't like looking at the old episodes now.

"I can see that they're struggling with a lack of money and time. But what you also see is a great creativity, you see people working and coming up with great ideas, notions and costumes. Sometimes they can't deliver because they don't have the resources. But to see other worlds being brought to life in the corner of your sitting room as they flicker on the telly is just magical."

Doctor Who was never, and will never be, buff and shiny. "It's not sci-fi, it's not *Star Trek*, all gleaming corridors and smart American people walking around sorting things out. *Doctor Who* is more crumbly than that, darker, more tobacco-stained and creepier." It is also "just great fun, a big, daft popular TV show with lots of wonderful things in it that people either like or they don't like, or they pass through it and they like it occasionally."

CAPALDI HAS HAD many supportive chats/texts/lunches with predecessors, David Tennant and Matt Smith. What advice did they give? "That's exclusive to the small club of Doctor Whos." Whatever they said, he found it useful: "Sometimes you're in the middle of a big production that has a lot of BBC politics and administration at work and it's a big commercial vehicle. But you're an actor and sometimes have to compare notes to see how the others might have felt about the things I am going through or am being asked to do. It's good to be able to chat to people who have been in the same situation."

More prosaically, it's good to chat about the workload: "It's nice to talk to people who know what it's like to get back to your flat at 7.30 at night and still have five pages of dialogue to learn for the next day and the hours are ticking away, and you've still got to get some sleep. It's good to have something to do with people who you have seen triumph in that situation."

Of course, where there is a Doctor, there is a companion, in this case the sensible, likeable Clara (Jenna Coleman). At 27, she's under half his age, so a pretty young woman and an older man rattling around in a police box, time for a bit of queasy inter-generational hanky-panky..?

But no, Capaldi is emphatic, there will be no funny business in the Tardis. "It's not a romantic relationship. Clara has to keep him in line, he's not good at getting human beings. That includes her. At first she doesn't know him. He has completely changed and she struggles. But he has a deep affection for her and wants to make sure she's looked after."

As we talk, we are still a few weeks away from the two-pronged "world premiere" of the first episode, which was screened, accompanied by Capaldi, Moffat and Coleman press conferences, on the same day in Cardiff, where *Doctor Who* is filmed, and later in London. Capaldi was rapturously received – I somehow ended up holding his Coca-Cola as he signed autographs for children at the after-party in the British Film Institute.

THE DALEK BOOK

▶ Fan credentials: Peter Capaldi shows off his *Doctor Who* script binder, decorated with inspirations from the show's past. Photographed by Ray Burmiston at Roath Lock Studios in 2017

▲ Peter Capaldi's inventive art skills were put to use for this *RT* shoot from 2016 – photographed by Richard Grassie. Peter's finished illustration was given away in a reader competition

He says: "I have been in the bubble of making the show for seven months so I'm not really aware of how it functions in the world, I don't quite know what is going to happen to me now. Maybe nothing will happen to me. That would be fine but life may change dramatically. I hope it doesn't, but David and Matt made clear to me that there are things that will change, that you have to be prepared for, like your visibility."

With this in mind, before accepting the role, Capaldi and his wife, Elaine Collins, a TV producer (the couple have a grown-up daughter), talked about what they could expect, including press intrusion. "We had a big talk. I've been very lucky. My life has been blessed and I had to think whether I wanted to change that. I was happy walking down the street doing what I want to do without having paparazzi there. And yes, we agreed there'd be pluses and minuses but so much of it was unknown."

Is he ready for the potentially enormous, distorting focus on his personal life? "My personal life is quite dull, there's not much to be interested in. I think that's one of the advantages of being this age, I'm not going to be running around clubs or buying a Ferrari."

Of course, the early Doctors didn't have to throw up their arms against the instant criticism of social media and, particularly Twitter. Is Capaldi worried he might get a flaming? "I'm not on Twitter or Facebook. I don't feel like a fuddy-duddy because I don't care and I don't have time. It's impossible for me to escape people's opinions, I don't go out there looking for them, but it would be impossible not to know whether one is generally favoured or unfavoured.

"But, you know, I was alive for 50 years before Twitter, empires grew, the Roman Empire came and went, in World War Two the Allies managed to defeat the fascist menace without Twitter, so I think I will be OK."

POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX
POLICE TELEPHONE
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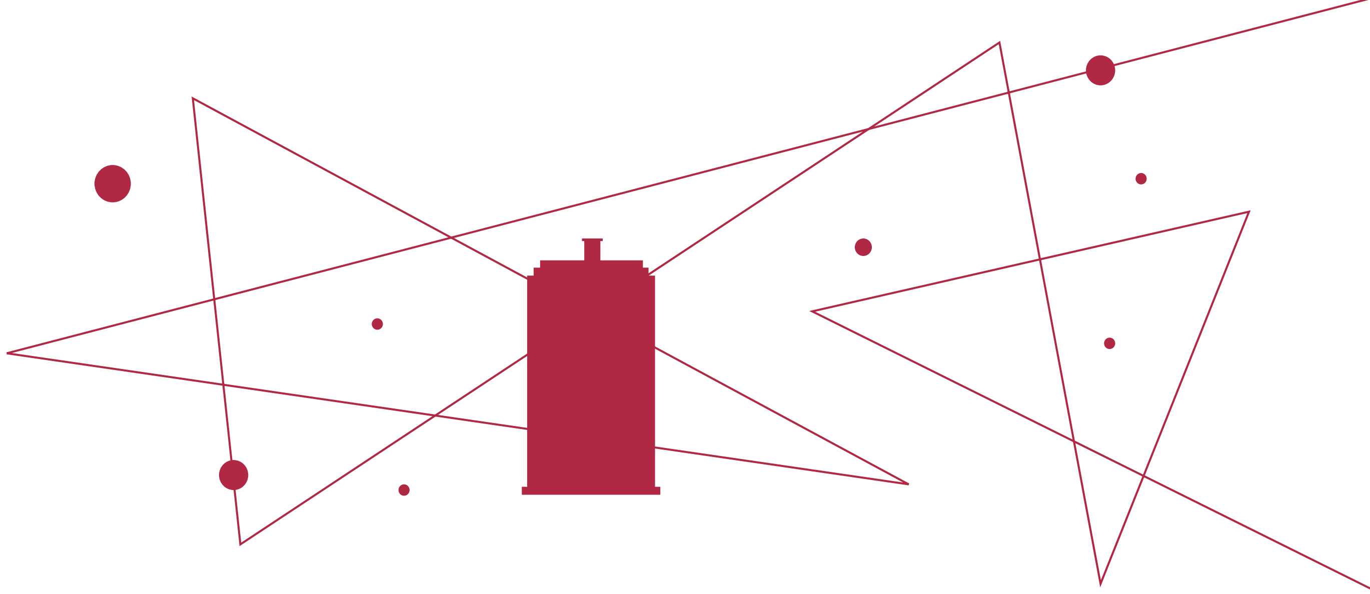
PUBLIC
ADVICE & ASSISTANCE OBTAINABLE IMMEDIATELY
OFFICERS & CARS RESPOND TO ALL CALLS
PULL TO OPEN

◀ Under new management – Steven Moffat in 2010, his first year as showrunner, shot by Mark Harrison



NIGHTMARE MAN

Steven Moffat scares people for a living. The fan-turned-mastermind talks to **Patrick Mulkern** about misogyny, Missy and the past, present and future of *Doctor Who*

PUBLISHED **5 DECEMBER 2015**

There's a telling photo of Steven as a boy in 1973 absorbed in a *Doctor Who* paperback. Can he paint a picture of the young Master Moffat back home in Paisley? "This is going to be so 'stereotypical *Doctor Who* fan'. Quiet. Bullied at school. Very bookish. I liked anything magical. I loved the Narnia books and entirely missed the Christian allegory."

Today he's a crazily busy man, a top dog in British TV drama, running both *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock*, global hits and cash cows for the BBC. He's just bagged a lifetime achievement trophy at the British Screenwriters' Awards, to add to the Emmy and five Baftas on his groaning mantelpiece. It's six years since Russell T Davies handed him the Tardis key and he says, "I'm gobsmacked by how much *Doctor Who* I've written – an insane amount."

The well of ideas isn't about to run dry any time soon, but the current series saw a shaky start with a dip in the ratings. An un-child-friendly time slot and being up against *The X Factor* and the Rugby World Cup on ITV didn't help, but Moffat concedes, "That wasn't our best-run launch. This isn't a new Doctor year, an anniversary or new companion year. It's dangerous when you don't have that special extra bit to launch a show with. And our ratings went up with episode five."

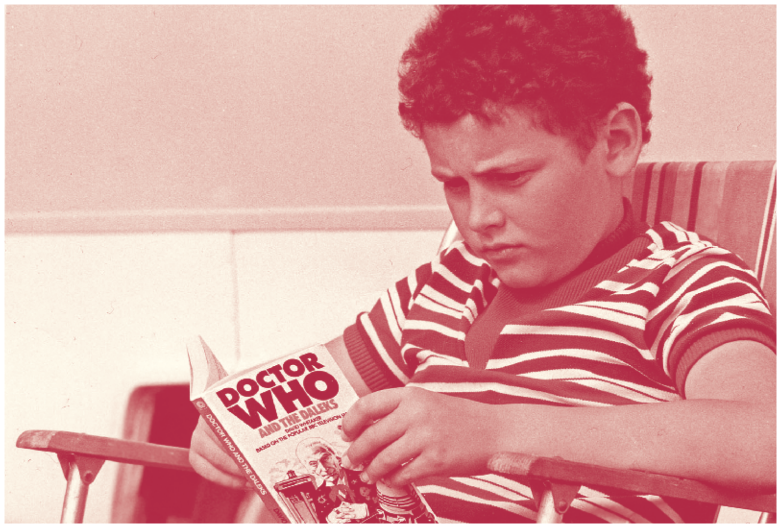
Meet Moffat for the first time and he might seem saturnine, taciturn, a tad unapproachable. I've known him long enough to discern that, however high his profile, he's shy at heart. "Not at heart," he laughs. "At every level a shy person. But hey, I'm 54. I've got the hang of it." He doesn't let it interfere with the job. "I'm relaxed about getting up on stage and talking to a crowd and might even make them laugh. This, my son tells me, is typical of introverts. But stick me in a room with a bunch of people I don't know and I go, 'Oh God!' and try to hide behind Sue." His wife, Sue Vertue, is a fellow exec on *Sherlock*. They live in south-west London with their sons Joshua, 16, and Louis, 13.

His father, Bill, was a primary-school headmaster in Renfrewshire. For a while, Steven ▶

“I'D NEVER LEAVE DOCTOR WHO IN THE LURCH. IT MEANS TOO MUCH”

◀ emulated his dad. With a degree in English and philosophy from Glasgow University, he began work as an English teacher at a high school in Greenock. “I feel fraudulent. I didn't complete three full school years. My father was passionate about teaching, and if you are, it's one of the most fascinating jobs in the world. But I was frustrated. I wasn't especially bad at teaching; I was good with the kids and reasonably popular. But it's not what I wanted to do – not that I ever imagined I'd get to do what I wanted to do.”

▼ Target audience. A young Steven Moffat in the 1970s, catching up on his reading



HE'S NEVER LOST his passion for storytelling or scary *Doctor Who*. “It was the only programme in the history of children's TV that was unsuitable for children. That's why we loved it.” Another fixation is Sherlock Holmes: “Arthur Conan Doyle's storytelling is amazing. It's pure, brisk and to the point. People don't talk about that enough. He's been obscured by his own creation.” Asked to list screenwriters he admires, he rattles off William Goldman, Quentin Tarantino, Aaron Sorkin and Neil Simon. “I wouldn't be grand enough to call them influences, though.”

Naming no names but “some things you see on TV are so bad, you think you shouldn't write for a week in case you're contaminated. In case it's got into your head. The sheer rubbishness of the dialogue and story construction. You have to detox. But you read a script by Russell [T Davies] and suddenly everything makes sense in an immaculate, clean way. I read [Davies's Channel 4 drama] *Cucumber* years ago for the simple reason I was stuck on *Doctor Who*, having a miserable time rewriting someone's script. And all I was doing covertly was saying, ‘Russell, could you send me some good writing so I can remember what it's like?’

▶ The view from Steven Moffat's desk at his London home

POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX

“The single most intractable trouble that bites us in the arse on *Doctor Who* is getting 12 scripts together that are good and makeable, with the right amount of CGI and prosthetics. That's the No 1. That's why this is a well-paid job.” Regular *Who* writers Toby Whithouse, Chris Chibnall and Mark Gatiss submit “incredibly polished first drafts. It's like having a day off.”

Are colleagues free to tell the top dog when his own scripts aren't working? “Yeah, and they do all the time. You want to know if your joke's not funny before you stand in front of your audience. If I haven't had enough notes, I'll send a script to Mark or Russell for feedback. Ben Stephenson [departing BBC drama chief] sent me his notes for the 50th anniversary special and helpfully numbered them 1 to 50. Within the bubble of *Doctor Who* or *Sherlock* everyone's polite and honest. There's not much in the way of sycophancy. I'm not regarded as a figure of awesome power and significance. I'm the man who forgets to eat and has to be fed when he arrives at the office, the man who forgets his reading glasses.”

Moffat prefers to write at home and has houses in London and Cardiff, where *Doctor Who* films. “But the reality is I can be writing in a room at the studios – where I don't even have an office – or on the train.” It's hard to shut out distractions: “If you've got two kids and a whole life going on, two TV series in production, there isn't anywhere to hide. If you hide, the problems stack up. It's like an air traffic controller taking a couple of days off.”

He admits sometimes he's stuck for inspiration. “No magic will occur, so you have to force it out. When I was writing comedy, I used to say, ‘Stare out the window until you make yourself laugh.’ With *Doctor Who*, it's stare out the window until you surprise yourself and think, ‘Oh that would be creepy.’” How does he get inside the mind of a superior intellect like Sherlock or the Doctor? “I take it seriously as a problem because you have to simulate genius while not being one. I try to work out what the Doctor is really up to and never tell you what it is.”

Between them, Moffat and Peter Capaldi have let the Time Lord mellow this year. “I was watching Peter on the World Tour [2014] with his shades on, waving to the crowds and being such a rocker. That's what he once was, rocking round Glasgow in his younger days when the whole world wanted him. I wanted to see that in his Doctor. My big note this year was, ‘You're the raddled old rocker.’ If you want to play your electric guitar on top of a tank, you damn well do it.”

Michelle Gomez has been a hit as Missy, the female Master; and they go way back, to when her husband Jack Davenport starred in *Coupling* (Moffat's BBC2 sitcom). “She recalls – and I do not – when we were all out in Montreux in 2001 and *Coupling* won the Silver Rose. We all partied, so drunk we could hardly speak, and I said, ‘I swear I'm gonna make *Doctor Who* one day.’ I like the fact that this conversation took place between the future showrunner and future Master.”

MOFFAT'S *WHO* ALWAYS favours strong, enigmatic women (including Alex Kingston's River Song and Maisie Williams as Ashildr). “I'm married to a very powerful woman,” he offers, opaquely. So why do *The Guardian* and online forums accuse him of misogyny? “It's a complicated issue. I never quite know how to respond. The general point being made by these people is correct. We need better female role models on screen. Maybe this is my dimwittery but I do not understand why *Doctor Who* of all shows is singled out as misogynist. I'm sure I'm to the left of a lot of my detractors.”

Clara (Jenna Coleman) is leaving this series after three years spanning Matt Smith and Capaldi, and Moffat is keen to show the impact it has on the Time Lord. “*Doctor Who* does that form of bereavement rather well. We have an emotionally engaged hero and those women he knows are not like James Bond girls. They don't just disappear between movies. When the Doctor ends a friendship, it tears him apart.”

He's only just starting to consider her successor and has in mind “specific ideas but not a specific actress. A new companion gives us the chance to relaunch the show. And we've got a really cool new idea about how to do that.” He's signing up for another year and is knee-deep in plans for series ten but won't be drawn on when it will go into production, let alone air. After six years running *Who*, he's vague about his own regeneration and insists he won't leave until the right person emerges to pass the baton to. “That's an issue I'm actively engaged in. Everything is difficult in *Doctor Who*, including leaving. I'd never leave it in the lurch because it means too much to me. Let's not pretend it's not a big problem. But there will be a solution.”

For now, he's happy in his dream job. If he could time-travel, what would he tell his bookish 11-year-old self? “I think he'd be alarmed at me turning up from the future. Since it all worked out well, I'd probably forbear from saying anything.”

▲ **SHADOW PLAY**

Steven Moffat in his garden in 2015, shot by Richard Ansett… and stalked by a Weeping Angel – his fan-favourite monster creation. “Being scared of the dark and being scared of monsters is basically a childish impulse,” Moffat told *RT* in 2007, introducing the stony creatures. “There's always something of the nursery about horror… The kind of fear that *Doctor Who* plays on is that of cowering in your bed at night as an eight-year-old, wondering what that shadow in the corner is.”

FLY AWAY, PETER

Photographer **Ray Burmiston** captured the *Doctor Who* crew as they said goodbye to Peter Capaldi and Steven Moffat

PUBLISHED **23 DECEMBER 2017**

◀ Peter Capaldi outside his trailer at BBC Roath Lock Studios in July 2017

◀ Quiet time for Peter Capaldi in his trailer

■ CHILD'S PLAY

"*Doctor Who* is a hugely challenging show to write and to act in," said Peter Capaldi in 2017, reflecting on his time as leading man. "It has to turn on a dime from comedy to terror to tragedy. It's a children's show that developed into something more complex, a bit more adult-orientated, but we have a duty to play to the seven-year-old as well as the 42-year-old. Sometimes you have to be more comic than you'd normally be comfortable with, but it's important."

▼ Peter preparing to film a scene with Pearl Mackie as Bill Potts

▲ Pearl and Peter go over their lines

▲ Peter with his script binder, decorated with vintage *Doctor Who* influences

■ DOCTOR, DOCTOR...

Peter Capaldi's send-off *Twice Upon a Time* featured a return for the first Doctor, originally played by William Hartnell. David Bradley played the actor in 2013's *Doctor Who* origins biopic *An Adventure in Space and Time* – so when Steven Moffat decided the perfect goodbye to Peter Capaldi's incumbent Doctor would be to bring back the very first version of the Time Lord, Bradley got the call. "It's part impersonation, part capturing some of those mannerisms – but not just a direct mimicry," says Bradley of playing Hartnell's Doctor, rather than the man himself. "I wanted to make it my own, while honouring his performance."

▼ A selfie for David Bradley and Pearl Mackie

▶ Peter tuning up on the Tardis set

■ DEATH WISH

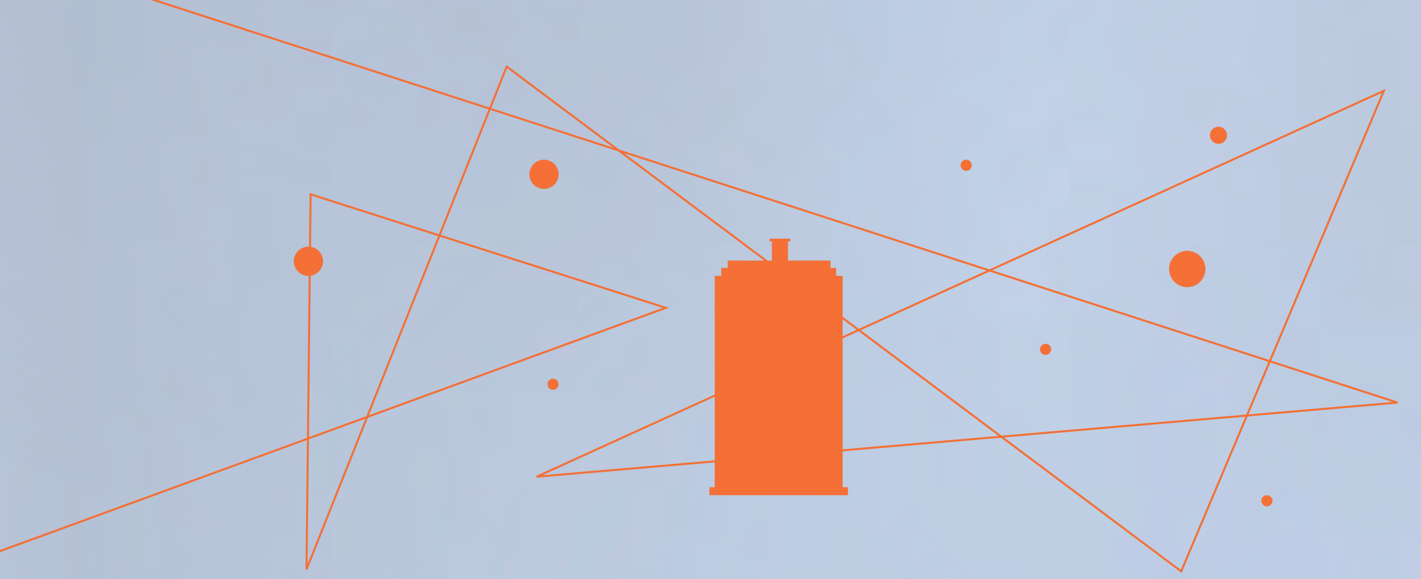
Preparing to film his Doctor's demise, Peter Capaldi offered a psychological explanation of the Doctor's appeal to *RT*: "It's one of the nice things about the show, it's not encouraged in the publicity, but it is quite... sad. This death motif... A lot of the young people I meet who love it, they tend to feel slightly outside, not part of the gang. In a way, it's a show for not-cool people, which now has suddenly become for cool people as well. People's relationship with the show is very personal."

◀ That's a wrap! Cast and crew gather for a final photograph to mark the end of an era

■ WELL-EARNED REST

"I haven't put a show out that I considered a disaster. But I haven't put one out that I didn't think was going to be," showrunner Steven Moffat told *RT* in 2017, reflecting on his era. "Every single one was reeling towards the precipice at some point. Throughout my *Doctor Who* time I felt I had my nose pressed against the next disaster."

So was it a wrench or a relief to say goodbye? "It's more of a relief because my last year in the job was colossal. So I'm still marvelling at the idea of having weekends off, not getting up at four in the morning to start typing. There's only so long you can live like that."



THE GIRL WHO WAITED

Jodie Whittaker may have struggled at school but, as Emma Freud discovers, she's perfectly qualified to play the smartest alien in the galaxy

PUBLISHED **6 OCTOBER 2018**

OVER A DECADE before becoming the first female Doctor Who, the then 25-year-old Jodie Whittaker gave an interview to her local newspaper. She said: "When we were training, it was a 50/50 male/female split, but we knew when we came out that 80 per cent of acting jobs are for men. A woman is never going to get to be Bond or Doctor Who. That will never happen."

Yet here we are, and I can't think of a more perfect woman to take on this historic challenge. I first met Jodie in 2015 when I helped produce Dermot O'Leary's 24-hour Danceathon for Comic Relief. We needed celebrities to come down and cheer him on, and although I'd never met Jodie, I'd become obsessed with her from watching *Broadchurch*. I sneakily found her email and asked her to swing by at any point during the 24 hours. Of the people I asked, 90 per cent came for half an hour during the day. Jodie doesn't work like that…

"First I went to the shops and bought a Red Nose Day T-shirt," she recalls. "I had to get an XXL because I was eight months pregnant. I got there at ten in the evening because most people had gone and I thought he might need a friendly face. Poor guy, by midnight he really hit a wall. I was dancing till 2am but then everyone got worried I was going to go into labour so eventually I was sent home."

Born and raised in West Yorkshire, Jodie, now 36, has always been a dynamo. Her first stage job was at Shakespeare's Globe (*The Storm* in 2005), her first movie was opposite Peter O'Toole (*Venus* in 2006) and her quietly devastating performance in *Broadchurch* as Beth Latimer made her virtually a national treasure.

When she calls by to discuss her new role as the Doctor, my son is at home worrying about ▶

◀ Leading light: Jodie Whittaker photographed by Mark Harrison in 2019

◀ his GCSEs. As soon as she arrives, Jodie reassures him that her results prove he has nothing to worry about. "I got five. An A* in drama – thank you – an A in PE, and three Cs. I was delighted, but the school – not so much.

"One of the things that made me nervous about playing the Doctor was having to play one of the most intelligent characters on TV. I've always considered myself emotionally bright, just not necessarily academic. It wasn't that I didn't understand things at school, I did – I just couldn't take them in, using the traditional teaching methods. There are 30 kids in most classes, and if you are in the back end of that, it's hard to keep up."

So how did she cope during her school days? "I've always learnt to enjoy life through make believe. As a kid I could sit, and play, and be, in a world I imagined – and it turned into my way of learning. I'd struggle with things that didn't capture that for me. But if I could apply my imagination to those subjects, it worked: so I gave a division sign a character and the numbers on either side a bit of a story. If I made it move or talk, it made sense and I could do it."

I wonder if anyone has since pointed out to that school that this girl was described by Peter Capaldi as a "super-smart force of nature" and is now playing the most intelligent alien in the galaxy.

Luckily, those early knocks didn't seem to hold her back – she has the confidence of a head girl. "It wasn't massively angsty for me because my parents didn't pressurise me academically. It's all down to who you come home to. My parents just asked me: 'Do you try? Are you a good person?' That was all they needed to know."

Were they similarly supportive when she decided to try acting? "Yes, very. I was really lucky – they supported the fact that I wanted to do something that wasn't in their life. At 15, a careers advisor said to me, 'Most actors don't make it, what's your back-up plan?' My parents were furious and just said, 'Do NOT have a back-up plan. Work at what you want to do.'"

Christian Burgess, head of drama at the Guildhall in London, where Jodie went on to study acting, has said this about her: "I think initially Jodie felt she hadn't had a very powerful, formal education, but she has this innate actor's intelligence, which she gradually came to recognise as being much more useful than having been to Oxford or Cambridge. She's fearless, that's the thing. And when she decides she wants a job, she goes into a room and convinces them that they have to have her."

So what exactly does this actress have that made her the perfect person to play the most enigmatic character in TV history? For one thing, the *Doctor Who* team had decided very early on that they were going to change the gender, she explains. "Chris Chibnall [the new showrunner] knew he was writing for a woman. We worked together on *Broadchurch* and he asked me to come in to audition with my own accent, and all my fidgeting, really being me.

"I think I have an energy Chris felt would drive this part. I'm more comfortable viewing things in the child version of me than the grown-up. I wouldn't say it's being fearless – because children aren't scared, they don't have the bruises – perhaps more naivety.

"It's the 'lightbulb' thing. If you turn a light on in a cave, a grown-up will be scared of what's in the dark bits they can't see. Whereas a kid would be fascinated by the light. I'm not always the brightest spark in the room, but I know that I'll keep on learning new stuff all the time. I want to play the joy, the discovery, the fear and the curiosity. I have a short attention span, bound on set and my brain jumps from subject to subject. It turns out that is the Doctor in so many ways."

She admits to never having been a dedicated *Who* fan, but since getting the part has she studied the 12 previous Doctors as part of her process in creating the 13th? "I'd seen some growing up, but once I started auditioning, Chris was happy for me to come in with fresh eyes. Because of the wonders of the internet, I was able to do the research without watching every episode. I wanted to make sure my choices were instinctive to me, rather than mimicking a previous performance. As a new Whovian, when I hand over to the next Doctor I can't wait to cane every episode of this show – I'm going to start at [first Doctor] William Hartnell and do it in order."

With one series of ten programmes under her belt, as well as a Christmas special, she's employing the same tactics with the loquacious dialogue that she used with long division. "I'm doing what I do with every script. Always, everything is pictures. It makes perfect sense when I turn all that information into images. I get the script beforehand, I think, 'That word means this version of the galaxy, what does that galaxy look like?' I apply my very normal instinct when I'm talking about space, or time ▶

"I HAVE A SHORT ATTENTION SPAN AND MY BRAIN JUMPS FROM SUBJECT TO SUBJECT. THAT IS THE DOCTOR IN SO MANY WAYS"

◀ A colourful shot of the 13th Doctor from 2019 by Mark Harrison

▼ **WE ARE FAMILY**

The extended Tardis "fam" in 2019 – Graham (Bradley Walsh), the Doctor (Jodie Whittaker), Ryan (Tosin Cole) and Yaz (Mandip Gill).
Yaz became the first companion to span an entire Doctor's era, and was devoted to Jodie's incarnation. "I just thought, 'I'm not ready for this journey to end,' " Mandip Gill told *RT* in 2020. "Why leave something if you're enjoying it, it's working and there's development? I don't know when it will end for me because as a person and as a character, there's so much more to explore."

▲ Next stop, adventure! Jodie Whittaker photographed by Ray Burmiston in 2018

◀ or historical events – and the pictures say it."

In accepting the part, Jodie's taking on more than the scripts – she's part of the redefinition of women in the television industry, a potentially key player in the female army demanding parity, and she's already thrown a mighty brick through the glass ceiling... "Thing is, I've never felt that there was a glass ceiling to break, because I've never put a glass ceiling up there. When I was little, not looking like someone didn't stop me from looking up to them. I wanted to be Mikey in *The Goonies* or Atreyu in *The NeverEnding Story*. I didn't care it was a boy playing the part.

"I don't want to defend the decision to have a female Doctor because there's nothing to defend – I'm playing an alien. Matt Smith wasn't qualified. Peter Capaldi wasn't qualified. They can challenge me about my academic qualifications – fine – but no one can be properly qualified for this job unless they've got two hearts and come from Gallifrey."

Then how does she feel about the drama that surrounded the announcement of her getting the job? "I truly hope that in a couple of years casting a woman in a traditionally male role won't be so exciting – because when it's *not* celebrated, it will mean it's no longer unusual to have this sort of parity.

"I'm always asked, 'Do you think James Bond should now be a woman?' But that's not the conversation. It's really – 'Should every point of view be the same?' And the answer is no. Stories shouldn't always be told from the same perspective. It's a mistake to think that the only heroes are white men. I've spent the last nine months hanging out with my *Doctor Who* family – Tosin [Cole], Bradley [Walsh] and Mandip [Gill] – and those are very different points of view. I get to see the world for a fleeting moment through their eyes. How lucky am I? It's the representation of humanity that matters. That's The Conversation."

And what about The Pay-Check Conversation – did she ask for equal pay? "I didn't need to."

On Sunday, when the first episode is broadcast, her life is going to change. How does she feel about her impending superstardom? "When I was younger and said I wanted to be an actress, lots of people said, 'Oh, you want to be famous!' No – I never wanted to be famous, I just wanted to be an actor, and it's one of the things that goes along with doing the work. With other professions, like a tennis player, you'd never say to them, 'Oh, you want to be famous!' They don't, they want to become the best that they can be – but they never get accused of 'wanting fame'. I'm aware of it but it ain't the aim. The aim is to do exciting work that reaches an audience."

She's already put in place some strong boundaries to protect her from the noise of celebrity – she never talks about her marriage, hasn't revealed the name of her daughter, and isn't on any platform of social media. "I find it hard when I'm really passionate about something, that I don't have that public voice. But you can't pick your public voice, and I only want it sometimes."

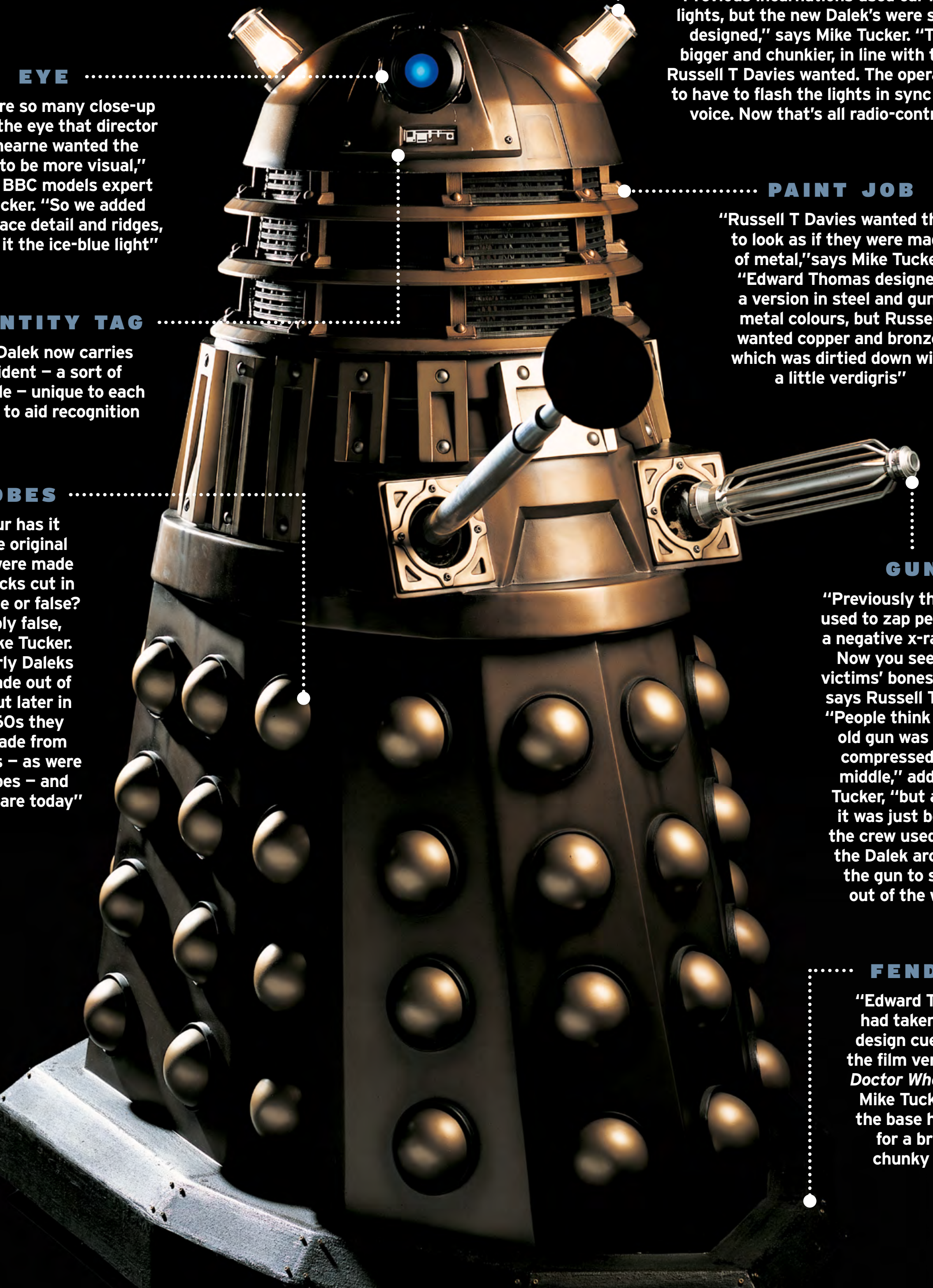
A few years ago Jodie was asked to open the sixth form college of the school she attended. "I declined at the time, but in the future I'd love to go back and maybe talk to the students – it's important to stress to young people that there are so many choices to make and so many different ways you can succeed."

Last week, sitting alongside my schoolboy son, I watched a preview of Jodie being brilliant in episode one of the 13th Doctor's adventures. As the end credits rolled, he leant over and whispered: "I knew I didn't need to do my homework."

TIN POT DICTATOR

Exterminate! Showrunner Russell T Davies and model maker Mike Tucker discuss how the Daleks were polished up for the new era

PUBLISHED **30 APRIL 2005**



MARK HARRISON

EYE

"There are so many close-up shots of the eye that director Joe Ahearne wanted the eyeball to be more visual," explains BBC models expert Mike Tucker. "So we added more surface detail and ridges, and gave it the ice-blue light"

IDENTITY TAG

The Dalek now carries an ident – a sort of barcode – unique to each Dalek to aid recognition

GLOBES

Rumour has it that the original globes were made of ballcocks cut in two – true or false? Probably false, says Mike Tucker. "The early Daleks were made out of wood, but later in the 1960s they were made from fibreglass – as were the globes – and they still are today"

LIGHTS

"Previous incarnations used car indicator lights, but the new Dalek's were specially designed," says Mike Tucker. "They're bigger and chunkier, in line with the look Russell T Davies wanted. The operator used to have to flash the lights in sync with the voice. Now that's all radio-controlled"

PAINT JOB

"Russell T Davies wanted them to look as if they were made of metal,"says Mike Tucker. "Edward Thomas designed a version in steel and gunmetal colours, but Russell wanted copper and bronze, which was dirtied down with a little verdigris"

GUN

"Previously the Daleks used to zap people with a negative x-ray effect. Now you see all the victims' bones as well," says Russell T Davies. "People think that the old gun was always compressed in the middle," adds Mike Tucker, "but actually it was just because the crew used to haul the Dalek around by the gun to shift it out of the way!"

FENDER

"Edward Thomas had taken some design cues from the film versions of *Doctor Who*," says Mike Tucker. "At the base he went for a brutal, chunky feel"

1963
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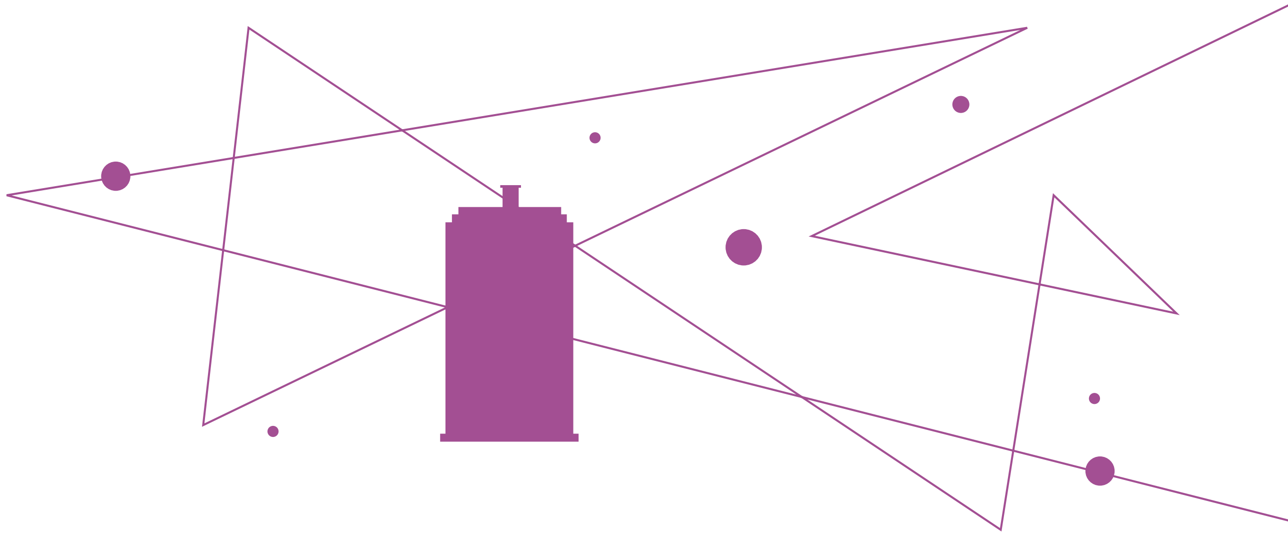


THE CLOCK IS TICKING

After three action-packed series as showrunner, **Chris Chibnall** is preparing to hand back the keys to the Tardis. **Robin Parker** asks, will he miss it?

PUBLISHED **16 APRIL 2022**

Nobody in TV cuts a more relaxed figure than a demob-happy *Doctor Who* showrunner. The heavy toll of years spent configuring their galaxy-spinning imagination with the hard reality of budgets and maintaining their role as custodian of secrets in the face of teaser-hungry fans dissipates as they hit the home straight.

As Chris Chibnall prepares for his swansong specials to air (one this week and another later this year to mark the BBC's 100th anniversary), he has more reason than most to celebrate: producing the behemoth during the pandemic nearly curtailed his and Jodie Whittaker's three-series-and-out plan.

"That we made *Doctor Who* at all during the past two years is a miracle," admits Chibnall, hitherto far less of a public face of the programme than his predecessors Russell T Davies and Steven Moffat. "There was a point around April/May 2020 where it looked like we'd have to call it a day after two series. If we hadn't already planned to leave after series three, there's no way I'd be staying on now after going through that experience."

Looking back on the time-and-space hopping adventure, he says he's "flabbergasted" at the team's efforts to tell a story of scale. This being *Doctor Who*, of course, there was no let-up and a planned final trio of epic specials, culminating in the Doctor's regeneration this autumn, nearly fell at the first fence, with production and budget pressures forcing Chibnall to pare down *Eve of the Daleks*, which aired on New Year's Day.

"We had to ditch our original idea and I had to write a new script in just over a week," he reveals. "You can't just go, 'Right, we've got the series and then we'll do the specials.' You're constantly on this treadmill."

It's that treadmill that he'll miss the least: ▶

◀ Jodie Whittaker photographed by Elizabeth Hoff in 2021 for the 13th Doctor's final series, the serialised *Flux*

▲ Chris Chibnall with *Broadchurch* colleague Olivia Colman, photographed by Nicky Johnston at the 2014 *Radio Times* Covers Party

◀ simultaneously writing, filming and in post-production on multiple episodes as well as planning the next season. When he pressed Moffat on how he managed to juggle working on *Who* and *Sherlock*, Moffat said he didn't know, but somehow *Who* still took up all the time. "Steven told me, 'I miss the work, but I don't miss the workload.' That's where I'm heading towards."

Chibnall, 52, wrote five episodes under Davies and Moffat before becoming showrunner, and was lead writer on spin-off *Torchwood* for its first two series from 2006. Did he know what he was letting himself in for? Is that why he imposed his own exit plan? Partly, he admits.

"Having observed Russell and Steven at work, I knew how exhausting the show was, and Jodie and I both have families. I didn't want to be showrunning *Doctor Who* in the year my children were doing their A-level and GCSE exams, which they are now. I owed it to my family – I hadn't seen much of them in recent years."

The Chibnalls still watch *Doctor Who* as a family and he treasures a visual bookmark of his tenure: a photo of his eldest, aged five, in David Tennant's Tardis and another photo of him, now aged 18, on the set of Whittaker's ship. "It's been woven into our lives – probably a bit too much to be honest!"

It's been woven into his life since Tom Baker played the Doc. I feel the need to check: you have had fun in your dream job, haven't you? "Everything on *Doctor Who* is exciting!" he says. "You have to live in the moment and enjoy it, because you know you're never going to do anything like it ever again, whatever you do."

NEVERTHELESS, THE CONVOLUTED dovetailing plotlines of a few of his episodes took some effort to follow and that cost him some of the goodwill from casual viewers that greeted Whittaker's arrival: even the New Year special mustered fewer than five million within a week of its broadcast, a far cry from the 13.3m who tuned in to David Tennant's biggest Christmas special in 2007, at the peak of Davies's imperial phase.

If these figures, and the more vocal fan reactions, bother him, he's not showing it. Asked how much consideration he gives to fandom, he is blunt: "Absolute zero. That was the advice from both Russell and Steven." He had a vision for a three-series arc and delivered it – any other worries, such as whether *Who's* weekly release pattern is an "outlier" in the streaming age – is above his pay grade.

Landing a cliffhanger or teaser that encourages a return the following week is, he says, tricky to navigate in the streaming era and he is personally "all for the box set" as a viewer. He also acknowledges that the competition in sci-fi and fantasy has never been greater. But *Doctor Who* still has an ace up its sleeve: "Unlike all those Marvel shows and films, *Doctor Who* never ends with a punch. That's still an incredible thing."

Of his alien creations, he's proud of Swarm, Azure and Karvanista from last year's six-parter *Flux*, as well as his debut season's baddie "Tim Shaw", and relished placing old favourites the Sontarans in the Crimean War.

There's something of the old-fashioned repertory theatre that appeals to him in making the show. "It takes three weeks to film a standard episode and then you're onto the next, and we've kept pretty much the same team throughout. You can go from a huge pirate ship to a space station or a cabin in the Crimea. What I'll miss most is the constant delight at other crafts-people's brilliant work."

FOR SOMEONE WHO wrote all 24 episodes of ITV's *Broadchurch*, Chibnall's collegiate approach is striking, and his democratising of the writing team is one of his most significant legacies.

Where Moffat anchored his series to veteran writers like Richard Curtis, Frank Cottrell-Boyce, *Luther* creator Neil Cross and Chibnall himself, this most recent era has been full of new, diverse voices, from *Murdered by My Father* writer Vinay Patel to *Sea Devils* co-writer, playwright Ella Road.

"There's a swathe of amazing writers out there and it felt like I'd be doing the show a disservice if I didn't bring them in," he says. Some of the stories he wanted to tell – the Partition of India, the protest of Rosa Parks – demanded an authenticity, and a writers' room shaped ideas, with Chibnall having final pass on each script.

Stories emerged both organically from a shared interest and from serendipity in fusing loose threads from different story ideas. "David Lynch has a great quote: 'Plan vigorously and allow for the happy accidents.' Everything on this show is that, times a thousand."

He's also taken the elasticity of the format further than most, layering in a Doctor origin story as audacious as it is divisive – a badge of honour for any *Who* showrunner, it seems – you're not doing your job if fans all agree.

"You're not carrying a vase across a room – you've got to get in there and say what you want about the show, the character and the world," he says. "It's one of the few drama series without a written bible, and every era contains a contradiction or left-turn from what has come before. Any future showrunner will ignore it or run with it."

Davies is returning in time for the 60th anniversary. Which will he do, does he reckon? "Oh, I fully expect Russell to ignore it!" he belly laughs.

Before we come to his successor, it's worth remembering that Chibnall's desire to shake things up kicked in with his casting of the first female Doctor. Having worked with Jodie on *Broadchurch*, what planted the seed?

"First, she's one of the greatest actors of her generation," he declares. "But I thought – and I'd been guilty of this – the parts she'd taken didn't necessarily demonstrate her energy and physicality, her humour and her clownlike qualities." ▶

> **"UNLIKE ALL THOSE MARVEL SHOWS AND FILMS, DOCTOR WHO NEVER ENDS WITH A PUNCH. THAT'S AN INCREDIBLE THING"**

▼ FINAL FAM

Chris Chibnall's final *Doctor Who* team, photographed by Elizabeth Hoff in 2021: Yaz (Mandip Gill), the Doctor (Jodie Whittaker) and Dan (John Bishop). "You're stood there looking at a green screen and somebody is telling you what you're meant to be looking at," John told *RT*. "And you're thinking, 'Is this like a grown adult's job?' All we're doing is playing out! On one level, you're filming in the cold and wet but on the other side, we're getting to be children. You don't get that very often in your life, do you?"

◀ In her audition, he recalls, she "brought the Doctor in with her straightaway". Her idea of the Doctor fused Christopher Lloyd as Doc Brown in *Back to the Future* with Madonna in a trouser suit. Having spent most of *Broadchurch* sobbing on screen, she pleaded: "Can I please not cry?" Chibnall says, "I promised her she wouldn't be crying for a long time."

HIS WRITING LEANED into a childlike quality shared by actor and character – "like she's in a cave and the lights come on, at every moment" – plus a pragmatism and love of engineering and science that have inspired young female fans. Having planned an emotional journey of discovery for Jodie's Doctor over three series, he promises her story will wrap up "in a really huge, fun, action-y, mad, heartbreaking way. There'll be a lot of laughs and tears in that final episode. You want to do everything."

That final special is also part of the BBC's centenary plans, so expect a "celebration" of the broadcaster within the story, he teases. "There are some treats – Easter eggs and kisses to the past." (What can he mean? The Daleks blowing up Alexandra Palace? The Master posing as Mary Whitehouse? Start formulating your theories now...) After all, he says, the BBC is something worth celebrating.

"I have no idea why you would want to bash the BBC," he says. "Look at the amazing drama and entertainment they still pump out – *The Tourist, Time, Strictly*... Everybody likes to attack it until we have a pandemic or a massive war and then everyone asks, 'Can you tell us the truth, please?' and the BBC does that. We should never take it for granted."

He is eager to see how Davies remodels the show, and some of his production team are staying on for the 60th anniversary. "Everybody should have a big smile on their face. Russell is one of the elite showrunners and *Who* is very lucky to have him, especially off the back of *It's a Sin*, one of the greatest shows of all time. For him to have incredible ideas and passion for it, to want to take it forward again – that's fab. Nobody has a greater love for *Doctor Who*."

What did he learn from Davies? Launching into a passable impression of Russell's jaunty Welsh lilt, he recalls being told of a *Torchwood* ensemble cast scene, "I just want to know what everybody in this scene thinks."

Chibnall elaborates: "Everybody in that room needs to have a distinct point of view and it needs to be there in that scene. For Russell, as a humanist and a character writer, nobody's ever neglected, nobody's ever denied their moment. A tiny note opens up everything."

Would he dare impart any new-found wisdom to Davies? "The same as he gave me: enjoy it. I've absolutely loved it. It's such a privilege. Few people have done it and you're standing in the footsteps of those people across 60 years now."

So you'll be pitching him *Who* stories then? He laughs, a hoot as garrulous as the best of Davies's. "Absolutely never again! Clear red line, final script. I never expected to come back after working with Steven, really, and I'd turned it down a couple of times after that. I never thought I'd be offered the job and built into that is why I wanted to keep it to a very specific three-series thing.

"Supervising teenagers' revision is taking up my time now and there's lots of other things to write! I will happily sit back and watch. For all that it's been gorgeous all along, now it's like, 'Oh I remember this. This is what real life is like!'"

▼ Jodie Whittaker photographed backstage at Roath Lock Studios by Mark Harrison in 2019

"JODIE BROUGHT THE DOCTOR IN WITH HER STRAIGHTAWAY"

JODIE'S TIMELESS STYLE

A new Time Lord needs new clothes — **Jodie Whittaker** tells the story behind her outfit

PUBLISHED **6 OCTOBER 2018**

'I created my Doctor's costume with Ray Holman, the costume designer who worked on *Broadchurch*. I had an initial meeting with him and brought lots of images and bits and pieces that I'd seen. For example, I found an old black-and-white image on Google that spoke to me. It's of a woman walking with purpose in crop trousers, boots, braces and a T-shirt, and she just looks so comfortable and non-gender specific – that was my style point.

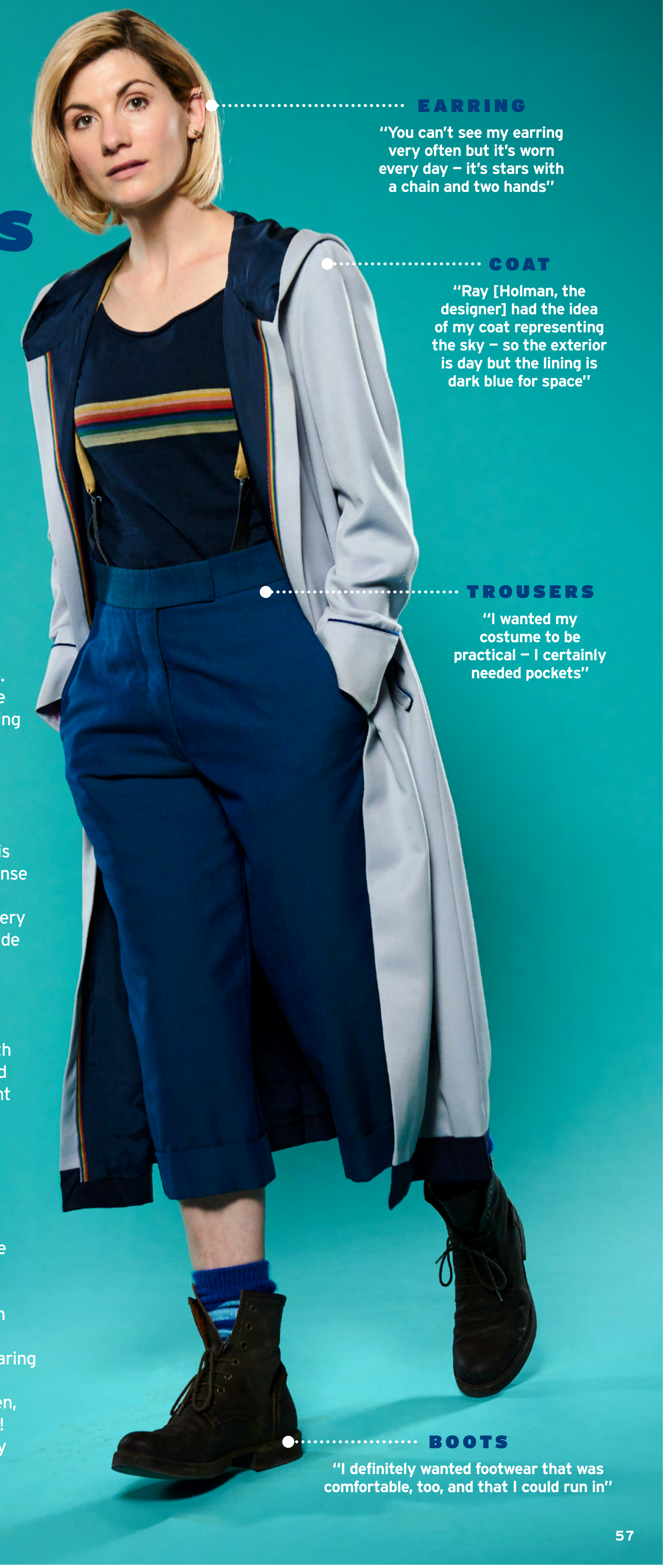
I needed it to have colour because I respond to colour. I really love the use of colour on Coldplay album covers, which I also showed to Ray. Which is where the rainbow came in – nothing evokes a sense of hope in me more than hundreds of rainbows!

What I really love about this costume is that every single thing about it is a choice that Ray and I made – I've never had that. Normally, your costume is dictated by the period a show is set in. I couldn't rock up in Converse in *Cranford*, for instance! Sometimes I look at other female characters and their costumes just don't look that comfy. But with this we could create every detail from scratch and give things a meaning or purpose. One day, I might be able to tell you what it all means, but for now everything is a secret between me and Ray, so I'm not allowed to say.

Collaborating with him to create it really was wonderful. I'm woefully uneducated in costume, so I took my guidance from the professionals and what Ray did that was brilliant was take my vague ideas and shape them into a whole vision. Then within that he cleverly introduced things that I'd never even thought of that were absolutely within the world I wanted to create.

What's amazing now is seeing other people wearing the costume. Having been to ComicCon [a sci-fi convention in San Diego], I've seen boys, girls, men, women, everyone wearing it – and it looks so ace!

I feel we've managed to create something really special and timeless.



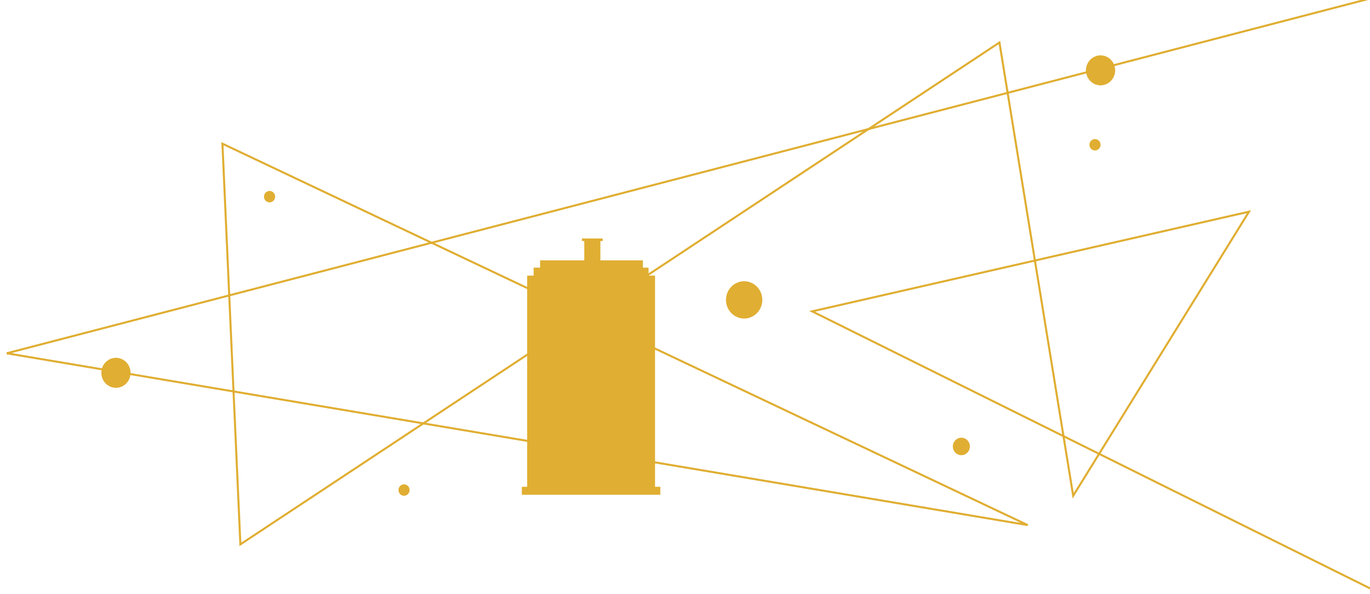
EARRING
"You can't see my earring very often but it's worn every day – it's stars with a chain and two hands"

COAT
"Ray [Holman, the designer] had the idea of my coat representing the sky – so the exterior is day but the lining is dark blue for space"

TROUSERS
"I wanted my costume to be practical – I certainly needed pockets"

BOOTS
"I definitely wanted footwear that was comfortable, too, and that I could run in"

RAY BURMISTON



MY TIME HAS COME

As he prepares for his *Doctor Who* debut, **Ncuti Gatwa** tells **Jimi Famurewa** about self-doubt, swearing and standing on the precipice of the Whoniverse

PUBLISHED **23 DECEMBER 2023**

Ncuti Gatwa's timelines are a little scrambled. When we meet, he's yet to make his first official appearance in *Doctor Who*. But his life as the 15th incarnation of the Doctor feels confusingly – or, perhaps, appropriately, given the nature of the show – like both a thing of the recent past and the yet-to-come future. "I've been waiting for so long!" he says. "I got cast so long ago and then started filming so long after that, that it feels like this thing that's never going to come." He laughs. "I don't think I'm fully taking in what I'm on the precipice of."

If he means the enormity of what lies ahead, then he's not wrong. From the moment in May 2022 when Gatwa was announced as the long-term successor to Jodie Whittaker's 13th Doctor (receiving the Tardis keys only after the surprise, three-episode tenure of David Tennant's 14th Doctor), his debut became one of the most anticipated British TV moments of the decade.

This, after all, will be the first time in *Doctor Who's* 60-year history that the series' main character has been played by a black man and an openly queer person; it's the dawn of Russell T Davies's splashy return as showrunner of the revived series; and it's the first batch of episodes to follow the significant budget boost initiated by the BBC's global distribution partnership with Disney.

On a personal note – as a lapsed, once-obsessive fan of the show since the days of Christopher Eccleston and flatulent Slitheen – I feel that Gatwa's casting is the perfect, zeitgeist-seizing move; the youthful, risky counterpoint to the nostalgic fan-service of Tennant's unexpected return. So there's a fair bit of pressure and expectation. Did he feel the weight of it?

"I was questioning every line," he admits, with a gleaming smile, sharply dressed and nestled ▶

◀ Ncuti Gatwa photographed for *RT* by Mark Harrison in 2020

▶ A Doctor in waiting. Ncuti Gatwa in 2020

◀ at one end of a leather sofa in a tastefully appointed London hotel. The 31-year-old's voice is a sonorous Scots burr, marked by a childhood in Edinburgh and Dunfermline, and often accented by expressive hand movements.

"It was the weight of the role – the legacy. And I don't know if I should say this because I don't want to let doubt in. But I thought, 'I can't fail at this. I cannot blow it.' And so everyone was trying to calm me down, saying, 'Ncuti, you're doing fine,' while I was all, 'No, no! We have to reshoot the whole day!'"

But if there was justified nervousness attending the early scenes that Gatwa shot in Cardiff last December, then it was counterbalanced by a simple fact: he always felt he had an innate understanding of who the Doctor was. "It's all in me – it's good casting," he says, hooting with laughter again. "Or I hope so. In the week of watching *Doctor Who* before my audition, I thought, 'I get it. You're always on your own, you're always wanting an adventure. You've always surrounded yourself with people. You don't really fit in anywhere but you're able to get on with everyone.' It was just… I get what's going on with you, Doctor. I see it!"

> **"THE WORDS JUST STARTED FLYING OUT OF ME — IT ALMOST FELT LIKE IT WAS WRITTEN FOR ME. I JUST THOUGHT, 'THAT'S HOW I AM'"**

He's not wrong – while Gatwa's casting has been hailed as bold and radical, there's an overlap in his personal story, and a tangible Doctorishness about his character, that almost makes him the obvious choice. He was born in Rwanda, before his family moved as refugees to Scotland, so his outward effervescence and warp-speed mind – qualities that brought him to attention as Eric in the Netflix hit *Sex Education* – belie a lifetime of the sort of watchful outsiderdom that a rootless Time Lord might sympathise with.

"When I got the [scripts] through for the audition, the words just started flying out of me," he says. "It almost felt like it was written for *me*. The way the character's mind works and the way it chops and changes. The way he's got seven billion thoughts in his head at one time and is always constantly thinking to the future. I just thought, 'That's how I am.'"

GATWA GAVE HIS audition with the livewire freedom of a man who thought he had no chance of getting it. And then, he barely gave it a thought – until he was standing outside a Tottenham barber shop with his phone to his ear, learning he'd won one of the most coveted roles on the planet. Was there any hesitation about taking on such an all-consuming, life-altering project?

"Oh, absolutely," he says. "I told my agent I needed a week. There was some apprehension. But it was also a no-brainer. As an actor, this was just too juicy to turn down. It was too full of everything. The humour, the fun, the emotion, the darkness of it. It was just like a juicy, juicy steak to cut into."

It seems fair to assume part of this reticence may have also related to a viewing public that hasn't always been welcoming of representative casting (see past negative backlash to Freema Agyeman's role as companion Martha Jones, or Jo Martin's turn as the Fugitive Doctor in 2020). But, in this, Gatwa was mostly heartened by the conversation following his unveiling.

"I was a little bit braced for impact and then was very pleasantly surprised because it was the antithesis [of what I was expecting]," he says. "But then, also, what's scary is that we all live in [social media] bubbles.

"I remember scrolling on Twitter and being like, 'Oh my gosh. I'm so loved.' And then I clicked on one tweet that wasn't as positive. And then that opened up an entire world of the opposite feeling. 'Oh no. There they are.' Seeing the anagrams of my name [made into a racial slur] was just lovely." He gives me a rueful bit of side-eye. "But it was interesting. As I say, I live in a very leftist, liberal bubble. And in fact, there's a really great episode coming up next year where we lean into that."

So will the Doctor's race be something that they directly address? "Yes, definitely," he says. "It would be stupid if we didn't. The Doctor has always walked into unknown situations and taken charge with authority. Historically, there's only really one demographic of people that are able to do that – and it's certainly not a woman, and it's certainly not someone black. Thank God, things are changing."

This change is all in keeping with Davies and the production team's desire to, as Gatwa puts it – with pointed air quotes – "push the show forward". However, it was an aspect of the new episodes that it took him a while to get fully on board with. "Going into initial production meetings I was keen to, I guess, keep up the traditionalism of the show," he says. "I didn't want to be seen as too wild a choice. So it's been a process of the show encouraging me to embrace myself."

And, presumably, the same goes for the BBC embracing the fact that, off camera, this incarnation of the Doctor will (as Gatwa did in June) pose nude for a photo shoot in British *Vogue*. Did he get word of any producers spluttering out their tea upon seeing those photographs? "I did think, 'Oh yeah, I've got my kit off so I'm probably going to get a couple of phone calls about this,'" he laughs. "But, no, they've been very encouraging.

"The only time I've ever gotten in trouble for anything was when I swore [while wearing] a *Doctor Who* costume. I got called into Russell's office. Woo! And he let me know that that's not acceptable. He said, 'Do what you want when you're out of costume, but when you're in costume, do not let us catch you swearing.' I was like, fair enough. And I guess that was a lesson. For the last four years I've been co-leading an X-rated show, and so I'm on a constant journey of learning what it is to be a PG role model and the lead of a family show."

THIS IS A mark of the evolution that Gatwa has had during his year making *Doctor Who*, without any member of the public having more than a glimpse of his take on the role. His first series won't air until next year, but he's already a couple of months into filming for a second run due in 2025. "It feels so much fun now," he says. "I've relaxed and [the Doctor] seems to have sunk down a little bit deeper, from my chest into my gut." Though he still says he'll be "far away from a TV" when his first episode airs on Christmas Day.

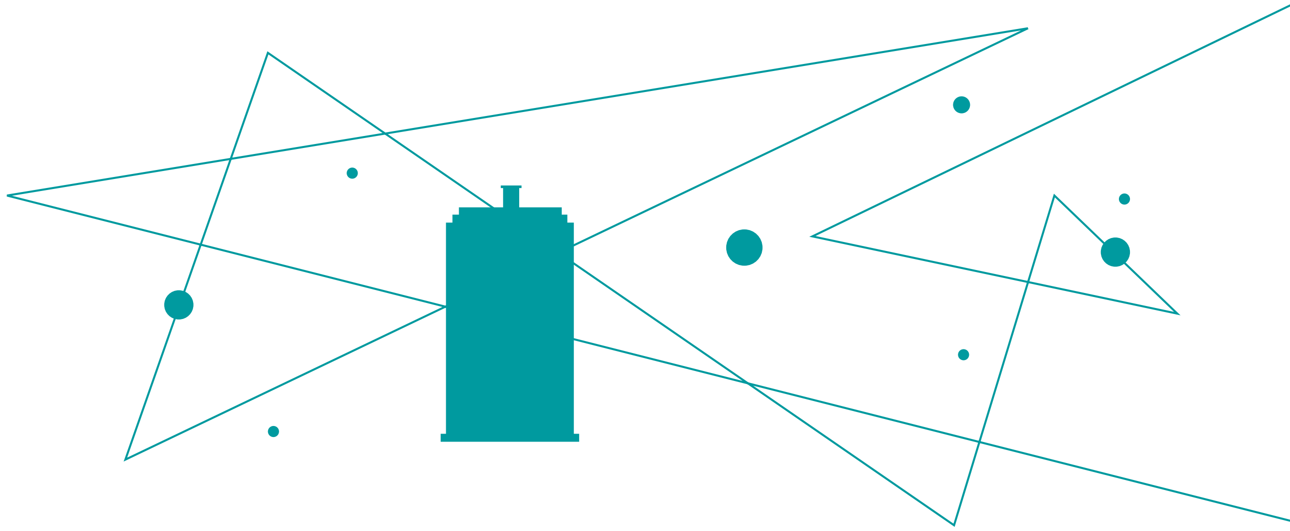
And what's next? Is he in *Doctor Who* for the long haul? Or does the lure of Hollywood – and more roles like his brief but memorable turn in *Barbie* – tempt him? "No idea, no plan," he says, quickly. "I just know that I'm loving it and my love for it is growing."

If he does want counsel on how long to stay in the role then he could always consult the "Whoniverse" – a group chat of former Doctors recently started by David Tennant. "They all gave me amazing individual pieces of advice," he says. "I spoke to David, I spoke to Matt [Smith], I spoke to Peter [Capaldi]. I think I felt a particular affinity to Jodie [Whittaker] just because of the shared struggle, as in the Doctor's never been seen like this before, and what that means for yaysayers, naysayers. How do you navigate that? She was so generous. With her story and her experience of it all.

"They're all very present parents," he says, with a smile. And proud ones, too, I imagine. Because, though he may have had to bide his time for his on-screen bow, to spend time with him is to be in the presence of someone who is every inch the Doctor.

For both him and the audience at home, this feels like a Christmas present very much worth the wait.

◀ Russell T Davies shot by Yoshitaka Kono for *RT's Doctor Who* 60th anniversary celebration in 2023



THE NEW-NEW WHO

Returning showrunner **Russell T Davies** has demanded a Christmas Day special for Ncuti Gatwa's Doctor. He tells **Huw Fullerton** about his hopes for the show's bright new era

PUBLISHED **16 DECEMBER 2023**

Russell T Davies is a hard man to deny. I should know because he's currently eating my lunch. He has a force of personality that's taken him from Welsh fanboy to top-tier television writer and producer – and allowed him to revive his favourite childhood TV show. Twice.

"I kicked in the door at the BBC," laughs Davies, "and said, 'Christmas Day, or else…' I literally demanded it from day one because I think *Doctor Who* just suits it perfectly."

This autumn, we've already had three hour-long specials starring David Tennant and Catherine Tate. Now, we're here to talk about a new Christmas special, the first that *Doctor Who* has had since 2017. Given how meekly I handed over my chips, it's no wonder Davies persuaded the Beeb to give *Who* back that coveted Yuletide slot.

"Look, it's Christmas Day. It's BBC1. It's a new Doctor. It's joy all around. I never liked *Only Fools and Horses* Christmas specials where they went to Hull or Spain. I think Christmassy things should look Christmassy. So, we have snow. We have Christmas trees. It's properly, properly Christmassy, from beginning to end. We're going to ride back into the job."

And as he says, Davies isn't riding alone – because as well as bringing festive fun back to the show, the new episode will also usher in a new Doctor, played by 31-year-old *Sex Education* star Ncuti Gatwa.

"Every new Doctor should be a chance for brand-new viewers to step on board. And I think Ncuti will bring in a new audience," says Davies. "So it's an open door. It's completely written with that in mind – you can watch it from scratch. It's absolutely designed for new viewers."

Gatwa, who's already filming his second series for 2025 at time of writing, was cast in 2022 after a rigorous round of auditions that Davies was ▶

“THERE’S SO MUCH PARAPHERNALIA THAT GOES WITH DOCTOR WHO... THE PROFILE OF THE SHOW, THE NOISE OF IT, IS PHENOMENAL”

▼ Looking to the future? Russell T Davies photographed by Ray Burmiston at the 2019 *Radio Times* Covers Party

◀ part of – in fact, he read the role of the Doctor’s companion. The choice was, he says, obvious after Gatwa’s very first reading. “For the Doctor,” he recalls now, “we auditioned men, we auditioned women, we auditioned non-binary people. So I didn’t fix anything in that regard. But I did the reading with him, and he blasted me off the face of the Earth.

“He was completely different from how he was in *Sex Education*,” he adds. “He had all this joy and menace and cheek. Many Doctors had a streak within them that’s withdrawn and guarded. Somehow, he manages to be all that, and yet he cries and he laughs. He’s a much more emotional Doctor, powerfully so. And that works beautifully. It makes us all reach into new areas, and try new things, and write new things. It’s very exciting.”

A new Doctor is big news for *Doctor Who*. But in many ways, Gatwa’s journey to the Tardis has been overshadowed by Davies’s own surprising return to the show, 13 years after he handed the reins over to Steven Moffat. “I left *Doctor Who* and went to do other dramas. And life was easier!” says the 60-year-old. “There’s so much paraphernalia that goes with *Doctor Who* – the world around it, and the fans, and the profile of the show. Just the noise of it is phenomenal.”

When Davies’s comeback was announced in 2021, there was surprise, even shock. No one could have seen it coming – not even Davies himself, until the BBC pitched the idea to him. He says that he’d kept thinking of ideas for the show, and of course, he still had *Doctor Who* in his bones, but Davies had hardly been short of work since he handed in his badge at the BBC. In fact, he’s been in a purple patch most writers would kill for, with hit dramas such as *A Very English Scandal* and *It’s a Sin*.

“I’m not saying any of those shows were easy to make, but you deliver a script, you shoot it and that’s it. So, I never envisaged running *Doctor Who* again. Honestly, I hadn’t,” he insists. “And bear in mind, it was immediately after *It’s a Sin*, which was such a successful show. It’s never quite true that a writer can do whatever they want, but I was pretty close to that. And, yes, I had many things I wanted to write, and many things on offer. But actually, I love *Doctor Who* more than anything. I genuinely love it with all my heart.”

There was also the fact that the BBC was keen to team up with an international streaming partner for *Who*. So with new money coming in and no successor lined up to replace Chris Chibnall as showrunner, someone had to steady the ship. “I completely agreed with everything the BBC wanted to do,” he says. “They wanted someone protecting the show. And I knew it would be hard work – but I love hard work.”

Money from American partner Disney has poured in, raising the bar – and stakes – for the new series. “I’ve never worked with this kind of budget – never,” says Davies. “It’s been brilliant for me to learn.” Special effects are glossier, the stories more ambitious. Davies waxes lyrical about what he has planned for Gatwa’s first full series next year, including a controversial move into ground currently occupied by shows like *Stranger Things* and *The Witcher*.

▲ DOCTOR ON CALL

The Doctor drops in on spin-off series *The Sarah Jane Adventures* in 2009, photographed by Sven Arnstein. “If *The Sarah Jane Adventures* had existed when I was eight and [fourth Doctor] Tom Baker had come in for an episode, I would have thought that was the coolest thing on Earth,” David Tennant told *RT*. “It’s the sort of proper, sophisticated, exciting drama with which we should be inspiring young minds.” The show starred Elisabeth Sladen and ran for five series.

“I was just a bit jealous that all those other shows were getting a bigger taste of the pie, so this Christmas, the enemy is goblins,” he says. “The show is taking a sly step towards fantasy, which will annoy people to whom it’s a hard science-fiction show. Episode two next year [*The Devil’s Chord*] is wildly fantasy. Completely making up scenarios on screen that we’ve never been able to show before. But the following episode is proper hard science fiction.”

During Davies’s first stint on the show, he was rushing to finish scripts five days before actors walked on set. Today, the scripts are delivered eight weeks before filming, which is done years in advance, with actors locked in for longer runs. There’s less improvisation and more long-term planning.

This new iteration of *Doctor Who* is obviously more organised, calmer than his first run at it. In fact, when he left the show back then, he gave an unprecedented look behind the curtain in *The Writer’s Tale*, a warts-and-all book (co-written with Benjamin Cook) recounting the stresses and late-night crises of his time at the helm. And while there was plenty of joy and success, he also clearly found the job stressful and demoralising at times. By the end, he was relieved to leave, and resisted attempts by the BBC to keep him in post. It’s hard, I tell him, to reconcile his comeback with the person who wrote that book.

“Oh God,” Davies mutters. “Yeah, I can see what it looks like from the outside. I would say, it was a book mostly written at two in the morning, so it has a melancholy about it sometimes. If you see me at ten in the morning, I’m laughing! I should write books at 10am.”

And anyway, he says, it’s different this time. In the 2000s, he was overseeing two spin-offs (*Torchwood* and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*) and a longer, 14-episode run of *Doctor Who*. “That was nuts,” he admits now. “How did I do that? I was significantly younger, I have to say. It’s not as bad now. I’m delivering nine episodes of one show.”

RadioTimes
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DOCTOR WHO
CASANOVA

◀ Russell T Davies and David Tennant at the *Radio Times* Covers Party in 2006 – shot by Mike Lawn

The pressure, it seems, is off. Today’s Davies is older and wiser – and after years of having to sing for his supper on other dramas, he can now dictate his own terms. “It’s tough getting drama commissioned. *A Very English Scandal, Years and Years, It’s a Sin* – I had to tap-dance to get those made. I had to sit in front of commissioners, and perform, and dazzle, and do all the tricks. And all three of those came very close to not getting made.” *It’s a Sin* was actually rejected by the BBC and ITV before it landed on Channel 4, and even then, Davies was forced to cut his episode count from eight to five.

“Now, I’ve just delivered a script for May 2025 that I know will get made,” he says proudly. “I don’t have to plead. I don’t have to pitch. And I think you write profoundly differently when you know your writing is going to get made, as opposed to something you hope will get made. In that situation, you’re kind of a beggar.”

Back in the big chair, the beggar is gone. Some days later, Davies commands the room at a 60th-anniversary screening, and looks more like some minor feudal lord, fêted and mobbed by the onlookers swarming around him, hoping a little of that *Doctor Who* stardust will rub off on them.

“Obviously, you’ve got so many responsibilities – to the channel, to the programme, to the viewers,” he tells me. “Nonetheless, it’s a greater freedom. And I like that.” It seems ultimately, while it can be a cage, *Doctor Who* is a gilded one.

21 MAY 2011

4 JUNE 2011

27 AUGUST 2011

1 OCTOBER 2011

3 DECEMBER 2011

1 SEPTEMBER 2012

8 DECEMBER 2012

30 MARCH 2013

18 MAY 2013

23 NOVEMBER 2013

23 NOVEMBER 2013

23 NOVEMBER 2013

23 NOVEMBER 2013

7 DECEMBER 2013

12 APRIL 2014

17 MAY 2014

23 AUGUST 2014

1 NOVEMBER 2014

13 DECEMBER 2014

19 SEPTEMBER 2015

17 OCTOBER 2015

5 DECEMBER 2015

26 NOVEMBER 2016

15 APRIL 2017

24 JUNE 2017

9 DECEMBER 2017

21 JULY 2018

6 OCTOBER 2018

20 OCTOBER 2018

8 DECEMBER 2018

7 DECEMBER 2019

29 FEBRUARY 2020

5 DECEMBER 2020

30 OCTOBER 2021

25 NOVEMBER 2023

16 DECEMBER 2023

4 MAY 2024

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▲ Final stand: Peter Capaldi's very last photoshoot as the Doctor for *RT*, shot on 7 July 2017 by Richard Grassie

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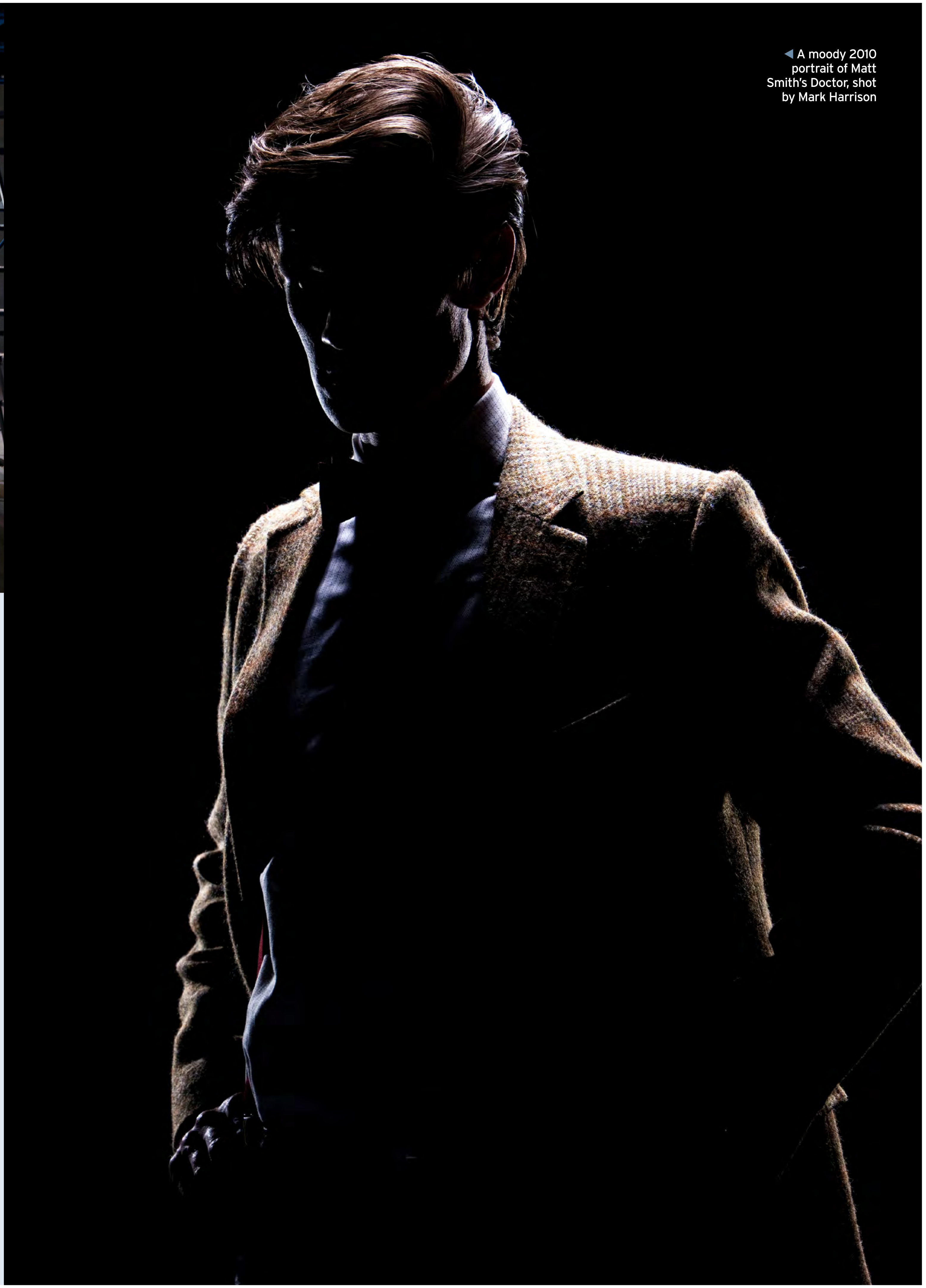

◀ A moody 2010 portrait of Matt Smith's Doctor, shot by Mark Harrison

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